

**MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ARCHIVES**  

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**A SELF-STUDY**

**AMA**

**ASSOCIATION FOR MANITOBA ARCHIVES**

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FOR ARCHIVES**

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**A SELF-STUDY**

Nancy Stunden  
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## ***ASSOCIATION FOR MANITOBA ARCHIVES***

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<i>p.iii</i>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<i>1</i>
<b>How to Use this Self-Study</b> .....	<i>3</i>
<b>Legal Authority and Purpose</b> .....	<i>4</i>
<b>Administration</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>General</b> .....	<i>6</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Financial Resources</b> .....	<i>8</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Staff</b> .....	<i>10</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Physical Facility</b> .....	<i>12</i>
<b>Archival Functions</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Acquisition</b> .....	<i>14</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Arrangement and Description</b> .....	<i>16</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Preservation</b> .....	<i>18</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Reference Services</b> .....	<i>22</i>
<b>Outreach and Public Programming</b> .....	<i>24</i>
<b>Summary Planning Document</b> .....	<i>26</i>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Improving our institutions is a common objective of people associated with archives in Manitoba. It is the first goal of *Plan 2000 - The Manitoba Archival Community in the 1990s*, the strategic plan of the archival association in the province. The preparation and publication of this *Minimum Standards for Archives Self-Study* is an important step toward the achievement of this goal.

Nancy Stunden undertook much of the work involved in developing this Self-Study, as part of a larger study of archival institutional standards and evaluation systems which she undertook for the Manitoba Council of Archives in 1989-90. The following archivists reviewed and discussed early versions: Carole Boily, Gordon Dodds, Zenon Hluszok, Gail Wiebe, Michael Moosberger, Paul Thistle, Elizabeth Blight, Diane Haglund and Peter Bower. Conservators Jane Dalley, Shelagh Linklater and Rosaleen Hill of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba provided valuable assistance, as did Neal Putt of the Manitoba Heritage Conservation Service. David McInnes of Historic Resources Branch, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, kindly shared his knowledge of museum standards development.

Our work was made considerably easier by that of the Society of American Archivists, which has been studying the issue of institutional performance standards for archives for more than a decade. We have borrowed heavily from the Society's 1982 "Principles of Archival Administration" and from its *Archives Assessment and Planning Workbook*, published in 1989.

The financial assistance of the Manitoba Heritage Federation and the Canadian Council of Archives made it possible for the Manitoba Council of Archives and its successor, the Association for Manitoba Archives, to undertake this project.

Elizabeth Blight  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Association for Manitoba Archives  
1992-93

# INTRODUCTION

Archives play a vital role in society. Through the preservation of information over time, they protect our rights and traditions, and ensure that the ideas and activities of each generation are made known to its successors, for their knowledge and enjoyment. This has become a more difficult and costly responsibility today because of the greatly increased volume of information and the extreme fragility of modern media. Caught in fierce competition for the cultural dollar, the archives of the 1990s require expertise, planning and resources in order to carry out their social mission.

Manitoba archivists have identified the need to improve the performance of their institutions as one of their major goals. According to *Plan 2000 - The Manitoba Archival Community in the 1990s*:

to discharge their responsibility fully and to make effective use of resources, archivists want to improve management and professional standards. This may be particularly true of small archives whose governing boards and operating staff often lack formal training and experience.

To assist in the process of identifying and assessing archival institutions, *Plan 2000* set out seven essential criteria for an archives:

- LEGAL AUTHORITY AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE passed by the governing body of the public authority or private organization in which the archives is a unit of responsibility
- A DESIGNATED PERSON who is accountable for the archives operation ... and either has taken or is pursuing a basic training course in archival practice
- SUSTAINABLE FUNDING from the sponsoring organization, sufficient to carry out its declared purpose
- SECURE, DESIGNATED SPACE for storage and handling of records, adequately protected from degradation agents such as water, fire light, and extremes of temperature and humidity
- An ACQUISITION POLICY prepared in accordance with Canadian Council of Archives guidelines

## Introduction ...cont'd

- ❑ RECORDS ARRANGEMENT PROCEDURES which observe archival principles of provenance and original order
- ❑ An ACCESS POLICY specifying public hours and procedures for using the records of the archives.

The standards enunciated in this Self-Study represent a somewhat higher level than these very basic criteria. However, they do not reflect a well-established, fully-functioning archives. They are still "minimum standards" which all institutions should exceed within a reasonable time frame.

This is a self-evaluation and planning tool designed specifically for Manitoba archives in the 1990s. It should enable a repository and its sponsor to assess whether their operation meets the current minimum standard recognized by the Association for Manitoba Archives. For institutions which are lacking in some areas, the Self-Study is designed to assist in the formulation of a comprehensive development plan.

The Association for Manitoba Archives and its predecessors, the Association of Manitoba Archivists and the Manitoba Council of Archives, have initiated several other institutional development programs which should be used in concert with this Self-Study. These include a basic education program, an advisory service, and a regular survey of institutional operations. Together these initiatives should help archivists and sponsors of archives to formulate and begin to implement development plans in a knowledgeable, effective manner.

## HOW TO USE THIS SELF-STUDY

This *Self-Study* is designed to help Manitoba archives examine how they are functioning and formulate development plans. By answering a series of simple questions about its organization, resources, and services, a repository will be able to assess whether it meets the minimum standard desired by the Association for Manitoba Archives. To assist institutions which are deficient in some aspects, the *Self-Study* includes worksheets for recording improvement plans.

The *Self-Study* is composed of three sections: a *Questionnaire*; *Planning Worksheets*; and a *Summary Planning Document*.

The sixty-three questions are grouped into ten topics. They cover all aspects of basic archival management including legal authority and purpose, financial resources, staffing, facilities, archival functions, and public programming. They require only "yes" or "no" answers. A negative response indicates that the institution does not meet the minimum standard and that it should formulate plans to improve in this area.

A *Planning Worksheet* accompanies the questions for each topic. These are to record necessary improvements according to the time required to achieve them (short, medium and long-term). Each item on a Worksheet should correspond to a particular Question which was answered in the negative. For clarity, the Worksheet entry should identify the particular deficiency and indicate as specifically as possible how it is going to be remedied.

The purpose of the *Summary Planning Document* is to bring together the specific improvement plans for each area into a comprehensive development strategy. Where appropriate, cost estimates and likely sources of funding should be incorporated into the final document.

To be most effective, the institutional self-evaluation process should involve all individuals who are responsible for the administration of the archives, including some members of the governing body. When it is completed, the planning document should be presented to the board of directors of the archives, or its sponsoring organization, for discussion, approval and implementation.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Legal Authority and Purpose

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Is there documentation that officially authorizes the establishment and ongoing operation of the archives, e.g. bylaw of sponsoring organization, charter, letters of incorporation, legislation?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Does the establishing documentation state the purpose and objectives of the archives?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Does the establishing documentation clearly specify that the archives is to undertake the basic archival functions: acquisition, arrangement and description, preservation, and providing public access to records of enduring value?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Does the establishing documentation define the archives' acquisition jurisdiction, including responsibility for records of the sponsoring organization and, if directed by that organization, for records of other organizations, groups and individuals relating to a particular geographic area, ethnic or linguistic community, professional or occupational discipline, subject or theme? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Are the purpose, objectives and acquisition jurisdiction reasonable, considering the aims and financial resources of the sponsoring organization?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Does the archives purpose and acquisition jurisdiction complement that of other local, provincial and national archives?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Legal Authority and Purpose

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

---

1.

2.

3.

Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Administration - General

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. Has the sponsoring organization or board of directors formally designated an individual to be responsible for the administration of the archives?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Does the archives maintain the following annual statistics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· number and extent of accessions</li><li>· extent of records arranged and described</li><li>· number of research visits</li><li>· number of telephone, mail and faxed inquiries?</li></ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Does the archives prepare an annual work plan and review the plan at the end of the year?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Does the person in charge of the archives prepare a written annual report on its operation for the sponsor, including major acquisitions, facility improvement, and use of the holdings?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Does the archives have a multi-year strategic plan, setting out its long-term goals and activities?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Administration - General

### Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

---

1.

2.

3.

### Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

### Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Financial Resources

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 12. Does the sponsoring organization provide funding which is at least sufficient for the purchase of necessary supplies for the archives?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Does the sponsoring organization, or the archives, have a plan to develop secure core funding for the repository?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Does the archives have an accounting system to record revenue and disbursements?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Does the director of the archives submit a proposed annual budget?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Does the director of the archives prepare an annual year-end financial report?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Has the archives taken advantage of the various grant programmes for which it is eligible, including those of the Association for Manitoba Archives/ Canadian Council of Archives, and Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Financial Resources

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

---

1.

2.

3.

Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Staff

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 18. Has the person in charge of the archives completed, or is in the process of completing, the core curriculum education programme of the Association for Manitoba Archives, an internship at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, or some other recognized archival training or education program? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Does the archives have a basic collection of archival reference books for staff to consult?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. Is the archives or its sponsor a member of the Association for Manitoba Archives?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Is the person in charge of the archives a member of the Association for Manitoba Archives?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Have job descriptions been prepared for all staff (paid and volunteer)?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Staff

### Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

---

1.

2.

3.

### Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

### Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Physical Facility

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 23. Has the sponsoring organization provided a building, or part of a building, for the ongoing use of the archives?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Is the building structure (including foundation, insulation, windows, door and roof) inspected annually and maintained regularly?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. Is the plumbing and heating system of the building inspected and maintained regularly?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. Does the archives consult with local fire authorities, implement their recommendations and comply with the fire code (including detectors, alarms and extinguishing systems)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. Is access to the archives building, or the archives section of the building, controlled?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Is there a separate locked area, to which the public does not have access, for storage of the records?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Physical Facility

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

---

1.

2.

3.

Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Acquisition

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 29. Is there a written acquisitions policy prepared in accordance with the Canadian Council of Archives' Guidelines for Developing an Acquisition Policy and approved by the sponsor?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Does the archives emphasize the acquisition of primary information, rather than publications or artifacts?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. Does the archives appraise all material offered or received, to determine whether the records are of enduring value and within its acquisition jurisdiction?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32. Does the archives maintain a record of each accession that provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· date of receipt</li><li>· donor or office of origin</li><li>· unit or series title</li><li>· extent received</li><li>· any access restrictions</li><li>· accession number?</li></ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33. Is accessioning done soon after the records are received?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34. Does the archives acknowledge in writing (in an agreement, gift form or letter) each acquisition received from outside its sponsoring organization, specifying the transfer in ownership of the records and any other specific terms agreed to by the two parties?                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Acquisition

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

---

1.

2.

3.

Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Arrangement and Description

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 35. Does the archives maintain its holdings according to the principles of provenance and original order?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 36. Does the archives prepare at least a brief description of each processed series or unit of records in its custody?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 37. Does this brief description contain the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· name of series or unit</li><li>· brief description of the form and subject matter of the records</li><li>· date range of the records</li><li>· name of donor/office of origin</li><li>· extent of the records</li><li>· date of receipt</li><li>· access restrictions (if any)</li><li>· identification or call number?</li></ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 38. Does the archives follow a consistent style for its records descriptions?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 39. Are the descriptions of the archives' holdings accessible to researchers?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40. When an accession containing various media is divided for separate storage, is this fully recorded for administrative and research purposes?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41. Are record storage containers clearly labelled to facilitate fast and accurate retrieval?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Arrangement and Description

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

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1.

2.

3.

Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Preservation

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 42. Does the archives have a written conservation policy that has been officially approved by the sponsoring organization?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 43. Has the Manitoba Heritage Conservation Service conducted a site visit of the archives?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 44. Are the records stored in a safe place, reasonably protected from dangers such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· overhead pipes</li><li>· boilers</li><li>· water heaters</li><li>· sewer drains</li><li>· areas subject to flooding?</li></ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 45. Is the records storage area free from extremes in temperature and relative humidity?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 46. Does the archives regularly use a reliable hygrometer or hygrothermograph, to record the temperature and relative humidity in the records storage area?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 47. Are the storage shelves and containers (boxes, folders, negative sleeves, etc) chosen to provide appropriate and effective protection for the records?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 48. Has daylight been eliminated from the records storage area?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Preservation

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

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1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Preservation (continued)

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 49. Have the lights in the records storage area been tested for levels and equipped with ultra-violet filters or dimmers if necessary?          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 50. Are the lights in the storage area turned off when the room is unoccupied?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51. Are staff and researchers given instructions on handling archival records (including use of pencils, white gloves where appropriate, etc.)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 52. Is smoking, eating and drinking prohibited in areas in which records are stored, used or worked with?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 53. Are researchers given a limited number of documents at a time?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 54. Are mouldy and infested documents segregated until they are treated or disposed of, so that they cannot contaminate other records?          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Preservation

Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Reference Services

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 55. Is there a written access policy which specifies public hours or how to make appointments to use the archives? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 56. Does the archives maintain a daily register of researchers, with their names and addresses?                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 57. When the archives is open for research, is staff available to supervise researchers and retrieve records?      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 58. Is there adequate space for researchers to work?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 59. Are records and services provided to all researchers equally?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 60. Does the archives provide basic reference service to people who telephone, fax or write to the institution?    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Reference Services

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

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1.

2.

3.

Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

3.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Outreach and Public Programming

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 61. Does the archives publicize its activities within its sponsoring organization and the community through appropriate media (sponsor's newsletter, local newspaper, radio and television, schools, etc.)?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 62. Does the archives participate in activities of its sponsoring organization and the community, such as reunions and celebrations, by mounting displays, hosting open houses, preparing articles for publication, and arranging for speakers, etc.? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 63. Does the archives provide tours, workshops, and information sessions for groups and students on request?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Outreach and Public Programming

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year)

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1.

2.

Mid-term improvements (1-3 years)

---

1.

2.

Long-term improvements (more than 3 years)

---

1.

2.

# SUMMARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Short-term improvements (less than 1 year) in order of priority

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1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.