



**Library and Archives Canada**

**Policy on Digital  
Preservation**



# Library and Archives Canada

## Policy on Digital Preservation

### 1. Effective Date

This policy has been approved by Management Team and takes effect on October 30, 2024.

### 2. Application

This policy applies to all Library and Archives Canada (LAC) digital preservation activities undertaken to preserve its digital collections, and to fulfill LAC's obligations when digital publications, digital archival records, or Web resources are placed under its control or custody, whether temporarily or indefinitely.

This policy falls under LAC's [Preservation Policy Framework](#) (2022). Other LAC policy instruments that have an impact on the activities governed under this policy include LAC procedures related to digital transfer, such as LAC's [Guidelines on File Formats for Transferring Information Resources of Enduring Value](#) (2014) and the [Procedures for the Transfer of Digital Government Records](#) (2024). This policy also aligns with LAC's [Access Policy Framework](#) (2016) and [Evaluation and Acquisition Framework](#) (2016).

### 3. Definitions

See [Appendix A](#).

### 4. Context

Digital preservation refers to the series of managed activities necessary to ensure continued access to digital materials for as long they are needed. LAC is the sole organization in the Government of Canada with a mandate to ensure long-term preservation on a national scale. This mandate includes acquiring, managing, preserving, and providing ongoing access to Canada's documentary heritage. LAC also serves as the permanent repository of records of the Government of Canada, as well as Canadian publications, Web resources, and other material of archival value. LAC is mandated to ensure that Canadians and other users can access documentary heritage for the long term. Digital preservation is critical to ensuring this mandate is achievable.

In fulfilling this mandate, LAC staff manage digital library and archival collections containing a wide range of textual, visual, audiovisual, and Web content in a multitude of formats. These digital collections are vulnerable to software and hardware obsolescence, hardware and media deterioration, technical barriers such as digital rights management, password protection and encryption, and a lack of metadata to support the authenticity and meaningful access of content.

## **5. Purpose**

This policy outlines LAC's approach to the preservation of its digital collections under its control or custody, whether temporarily or indefinitely. This approach also applies to preservation metadata which is used to inform digital preservation decisions and actions as well as some administrative metadata which relates LAC's digital collections to its descriptive databases.

The expected result of this policy is to ensure that all digital collections are sustainably managed for continued long-term preservation and that access is possible when taking into account LAC digital preservation capability and resourcing as well as the technical characteristics of the digital material.

## **6. Requirements**

### **6.1 Content Level Preservation**

LAC acquires records and publications for the purpose of long-term preservation and access. As part of the acquisition process, technical barriers can arise that prevent LAC staff and clients from viewing and using content, and thus will be considered when making acquisition decisions in order to ensure content level preservation is possible where feasible.

To uphold its preservation obligation, LAC:

- Maintains a registry of sustainable and accessible file formats that are suitable for transfer and used to create preservation copies.
- Requires the removal, prior to transfer, of technical barriers relating to password protection, encryption, digital rights management and other barriers to accessing content where feasible.
- Evaluates transferred content to identify potential challenges impacting preservation and access.
- Performs content level preservation where feasible on its digital collections which are free from technical barriers and that are in sustainable and

accessible file formats. Otherwise, digital collections will receive bit level preservation which may not ensure the same level of access to content.

## **6.2 Redundancy**

LAC maintains at least two copies of all digital collections in separate locations in order to protect against loss.

## **6.3 Integrity**

LAC monitors the integrity of all digital collections on an ongoing basis to prevent loss and to support the trustworthiness of these collections.

## **6.4 Continuous Improvement**

LAC commits to continuous improvement in the application of digital preservation within LAC. This includes:

- Sharing knowledge and collaborating with the wider international digital preservation community.
- Facilitating digital preservation good practice across LAC.
- Investing in the professional development of LAC's dedicated digital preservation staff.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

The Senior Director General, Digital Services is accountable for ensuring the implementation of this policy, and for the management of the preservation activities for LAC's digital collections.

- The Director, Digital Collections Operations is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- Managers in Digital Collections Operations are responsible for the operationalization of this policy.
- Staff in the Collections Sector are responsible for consulting with Digital Collections Operations when acquiring digital material to ensure potential technical limitations to preservation are considered in selection decisions.

## **8. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review**

The Digital Collections Operations Division will monitor and review this policy, with the operational areas responsible for digital preservation, within five years of its approval, or as required.

## **9. Consequences**

In support of this policy, managers will ensure corrective actions are taken to address instances of non-compliance with its requirements. Corrective actions may include training, changes to procedures and systems, or any actions deemed appropriate and acceptable in the circumstances.

## **10. Information**

Please address any questions about this policy to:

Policy and Strategic Support  
Library and Archives Canada  
550 Boulevard de la Cité, Gatineau, Quebec J8T 0A7  
[politiques-policy@bac-lac.gc.ca](mailto:politiques-policy@bac-lac.gc.ca)

## **Appendix A: Definitions**

### **Access** [*Accès*]

Access occurs when clients can find, identify, view, obtain, and use holdings.

### **Accessible** [*Accessible*]

Holdings are accessible when physical, technological, and geographical barriers to the content are removed and they can be used by as many people as possible.

### **Acquisition** [*Acquisition*]

Acquisition is the process of adding publications and records to LAC's documentary heritage collections. Acquisition occurs when LAC formally gains control over publications and records for their long-term preservation, and subsequently assumes the responsibility for the management of its metadata and for its use by future generations. For clarity, documentary heritage acquired by LAC is Crown property.

### **Authenticity** [*Authenticité*]

Authenticity is the quality of being genuine, not a counterfeit, and free from tampering during creation, maintenance and preservation of records. It refers to a publication or record's reliability over time, and is typically inferred from internal and external evidence.

### **Bit-Level Preservation** [*Préservation au niveau du bit*]

A minimal level which involves preserving only the original "bits" (0s and 1s) of the digital material.

### **Collections** [*Collections*]

All documentary heritage acquired through the *Library and Archives of Canada Act* and *Legal Deposit of Publications Regulations*, and any master copies generated thereof. For clarity, LAC collections only include publications and records acquired by LAC, and are Crown property.

### **Content level preservation** [*Préservation au niveau du contenu*]

Processes to preserve the meaning or functionality of the digital content and ensure its continued accessibility and usability over time.

### **Control** [*Responsabilité*]

The authority, whether exercised or not, to make decisions about publications and records, and their management for the purpose of preservation, access and disposition, regardless of who has custody. LAC control over publications and records may be partial or complete, and may be subject to agreements.

**Custody** [*Garde*]

The possession of publications and records, regardless of who has control over it. Custody may be shared and may be subject to agreements.

**Digital Collections** [*Collections numériques*]

A broad term encompassing digital surrogates created as a result of converting analogue material in LAC's collections to digital form (through digitization), and "born-digital" collection material for which there has never been and is never intended to be an analogue equivalent.

**Digital Preservation** [*Préservation numérique*]

Digital preservation is all actions taken to slow deterioration of or prevent damage to the digital collections, and to maintain over time its access, use and meaning and capacity to be accepted as evidence of what it purports to publish and record.

**File Formats** [*Format de fichier*]

A standard way that information is encoded for storage in a computer file. It tells the computer how to display, print, process, and save the information. It is dictated by the application program which created the file and the operating system under which it was created and stored. Some file formats are designed for very particular types of data, others can act as a container for different types. A particular file format is often indicated by a file name extension containing three or four letters.

**Holdings** [*Collections*]

Holdings comprise documentary heritage brought under the control of LAC through the *Library and Archives of Canada Act* and *Legal Deposit of Publications Regulations*, and any master copies generated thereof.

**Integrity** [*Intégrité*]

Integrity is the quality of being whole and unaltered through loss, tampering, or corruption. It refers to a publication or record's reliability and stability over time and is typically inferred from internal and external evidence.

**Long-term preservation** [*Préservation à long terme*]

Continued access to digital materials, or to the information contained within them, indefinitely.

**Metadata** [*Metadonnées*]

Any data associated with the management of LAC's collections. This includes metadata associated with the acquisition, descriptions and cataloguing information of collections, as well as technical metadata related to collections

preservation, storage, and access. In certain specific instances, it can include operational metadata that are directly linked to collections. Metadata may be acquired with documentary heritage and after acquisition, and may be created by LAC or by others.

**Preservation Metadata** [*Metadonnées de préservation*]

Information a preservation repository uses to support the digital preservation process.

**Sustainability** [*Durabilité*]

Sustainability is the quality of meeting the needs of the collections and its current users without outstripping LAC's resource capacity or compromising the needs of future users.



## **Appendix B: Related Documents**

### **Federal Acts and Regulations:**

- [Access to Information Act](#)
- [Accessible Canada Act](#)
- [Canada Evidence Act](#)
- [Copyright Act](#)
- [Library and Archives of Canada Act](#)
- [Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act \(Part 2\)](#)
- [Privacy Act](#)
- [Security of Information Act](#)

### **Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat:**

- [Policy on Service and Digital](#)
- [Directive on Service and Digital](#)
- [Policy on Access to Information](#)
- [Policy on Government Security](#)
- [Policy on Privacy Protection](#)

### **Library and Archives Canada:**

- [Preservation Policy Framework](#)
- [Evaluation and Acquisition Policy Framework](#)
- [Access Policy Framework](#)
- [Guidelines on File Formats for Transferring Information Resources of Enduring Value](#)
- [Procedures for the Transfer of Digital Government Records](#)

### **Other Documents:**

- [Digital Preservation Coalition \(DPC\) Digital Preservation Handbook, Second Edition](#)
- [International Organization for Standardization \(ISO\) 14721:2012, Open Archival Information System \(OAIS\) Reference Model](#)