

February 5, 2016

The Honourable Melanie Joly
Minister of Canadian Heritage
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Melanie.joly@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Joly,

Library and Archives Canada has recently released a National Heritage Digitization Strategy “Building a Canadian National Heritage Digitization Strategy”.

Documentary heritage is a cornerstone of all democratic societies and is an essential resource for fostering innovation. National memory institutions all over the world recognize the critical importance of making their collections available online and are developing strategies for digitizing their analog collections.

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada strives to strengthen our vibrant urban communities through building the capacity of Canada’s urban libraries. Our 45 member public library systems (www.culc.ca/about/librarymembers) collectively provide public library service to more than 60% 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. Our members employ over 12,000 Canadians.

We are a member of the Library and Archives Canada stakeholder group and have participated in the development of this critical strategy that will ensure Canadians have access to our cultural heritage. We applaud the work that LAC has accomplished to develop a unifying framework for multi-institutional digitization projects and are writing to express our support.

We urge the Department of Canadian Heritage to ensure that this significant endeavor is supported and has the necessary resources to fully sustain the infrastructure required to collect, digitize, and ensure access to our cultural heritage. It is critical that Canada be repositioned so that we are no longer behind the digitization and access progress achieved by other countries.

Sincerely,



Maureen Sawa, Chair,
Canadian Urban Libraries Council / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada