

THE ARQUIVES

# A DIGITAL 2SLGBTQIA+ STRATEGY

*The ArQuives' Digital Preservation  
& Digitization Strategy 2026–2027*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>VISION AND MANDATE OF THE ARQUIVES</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>DIGITAL COLLECTION OVERVIEW</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>CAPABILITIES ANALYSIS</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>DIGITIZATION PRIORITIES</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>DIGITIZATION PROCESSES</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>DIGITAL STORAGE &amp; ACCESS</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>GOALS</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>MEASURING SUCCESS</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>REPORTING</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>APPENDIX A</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>APPENDIX B</b>

# PURPOSE

The ArQuives will use this plan in conjunction with the following policies, procedures, and documentation:

- [Collection Development Plan 2023–2027](#)
- [Acquisition Policy \(A001\)](#)
- [Copyright and Takedown Policy \(A009\)](#)
- [Preservation Policy \(A012\)](#)
- [Collection Description Policy \(A025\)](#)
- [Digital Preservation Policy \(A028\) \[NEW\]](#)
- [Preferred File Format Registry \[NEW\]](#)

## Purpose of This Strategy

**The ArQuives’ Digital Preservation & Digitization Strategy articulates the organization’s plans and priorities for managing and preserving its digital collections. This strategy allows The ArQuives to make consistent and transparent decisions to enhance its digital collections, broaden access, and work to address systemic historical inequities within the organization. A comprehensive digital preservation and digitization strategy is necessary to preserve 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadian documentary heritage.**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of requests for digital materials from researchers and 2SLGBTQIA+ community members increased exponentially. Currently, The ArQuives digitizes on an ad hoc basis, which has led to inconsistency in digital surrogate management. Digital materials are stored precariously with sparse information about file formats, content, or backup locations. Data degradation is already evident, and the risks of further degradation and loss continue to grow, along with the risk of researchers accidentally accessing restricted materials.

With much 2SLGBTQIA+ history and activism moving online, the need to preserve born-digital collections has become urgent, especially with rising homophobic and transphobic violence, censorship, and erasure of queer and trans lives, communities, and histories from digital spaces. As there are no other community archives actively collecting 2SLGBTQIA+ born-digital material in Canada on a national level, this document addresses the need for a formalized approach to the preservation and recovery of 2SLGBTQIA+ histories. Equally important is the need for digitized born-analog materials (digital surrogates) to meet increasing demands for digital access.

This strategy establishes The ArQuives’ digitization priorities, which closely follow the [Collection Development Plan for 2023–2027](#). Additionally, this strategy will be supported by annual budget allocations for the digitization of physical holdings, a digital preservation system, processing of digital acquisitions, and digital storage. However, as a small, community-driven and -funded organization, best practices may sometimes need to be compromised to achieve minimum viable standards.

The Digital Preservation & Digitization Strategy has been created with the following core principles: access, documentation, discoverability, inclusion, contextuality, respect, reliability, representation, reciprocity, responsibility, sustainability, transparency, and preservation.

# VISION AND MANDATE OF THE ARQUIVES

**The ArQuives aspires to be a significant resource and catalyst for those who strive for a future world where 2SLGBTQIA+ people are accepted, valued, and celebrated.**

The ArQuives' mandate is to acquire, organize, and preserve materials in any medium by and about 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada. We provide public programming and access to information to promote greater awareness of 2SLGBTQIA+ histories and scholarship.

# DIGITAL COLLECTION OVERVIEW

**The current digital collection is approximately 46 terabytes (TB) in size.**

The digital collection includes audio (WAV, MP3), video (MP4, MOV, AVI), images (TIFF, JPEG, PNG), documents (PDF, DOCX), design files (PSD, AI), web content (HTML), and many other file formats.

All digital materials are stored on external hard drives, Network-Attached Storage (NAS), and The ArQuives' internal server. Additionally, approximately six TBs have been externally backed up through the University of Toronto.

Where permissions and copyright permit, digital materials are accessible through (a) The ArQuives' [Online Collections Database](#), (b) [Digital Exhibitions](#), (c) Gale's database, and (d) by request.

## **A Quick Note: Born-Digital vs. Digitized Materials**

The ArQuives handles two types of digital materials: born-digital and digitized born-analog (digital surrogates). It is important to understand the unique processes and needs of each, and note that the two have equal preservation priority.

- **Born-Digital Materials:** Materials originating in a digital format with no analog equivalent. *Examples: emails, graphics created digitally, websites, digital photos*
- **Digitized Born-Analog Materials:** Materials created as a result of converting analog originals to digital files via digitization, also known as digital surrogates. *Examples: digitized cassette audio files, scanned handwritten documents, photos of a 3D object*

# CAPABILITIES ANALYSIS

**Using the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's (NDSA) Levels of Digital Preservation and the Digital Preservation Coalition's Rapid Assessment Model (DPC RAM) as benchmarking frameworks, it is clear that digital preservation is still in its earliest stages at The ArQuives.**

The ArQuives' current and desired maturity levels have been analyzed in 13 key aspects of digitization and digital preservation programs:

- Organizational viability
- Policy and strategy
- Legal and ethical considerations
- IT capabilities
- Continuous improvements
- Community involvement
- Digital processing
- Bitstream preservation
- Content preservation
- Metadata management
- Discovery and access
- Storage and location
- Information security

Each element is rated on DPC RAM's scale from 0 to 4, defined as:

- 0 = Minimal Awareness
- 1 = Awareness
- 2 = Basic
- 3 = Managed
- 4 = Optimized

# CAPABILITIES ANALYSIS

## (CONTINUED)

**Some elements are more established than others and will require less attention to reach their target levels. For the 2026–2027 strategy, each of the 13 digital preservation elements fall into one of three statuses:**

### Implementation

No infrastructure currently exists for these elements and implementation must start from ground zero. The four elements at the implementation level include: (a) IT capabilities, (b) bitstream preservation, (c) content preservation, and (d) information security. These elements are all technical and highly specific to digital preservation. Progress will require investment in hardware and software, as well as time to design processes and train staff.

### Improvement

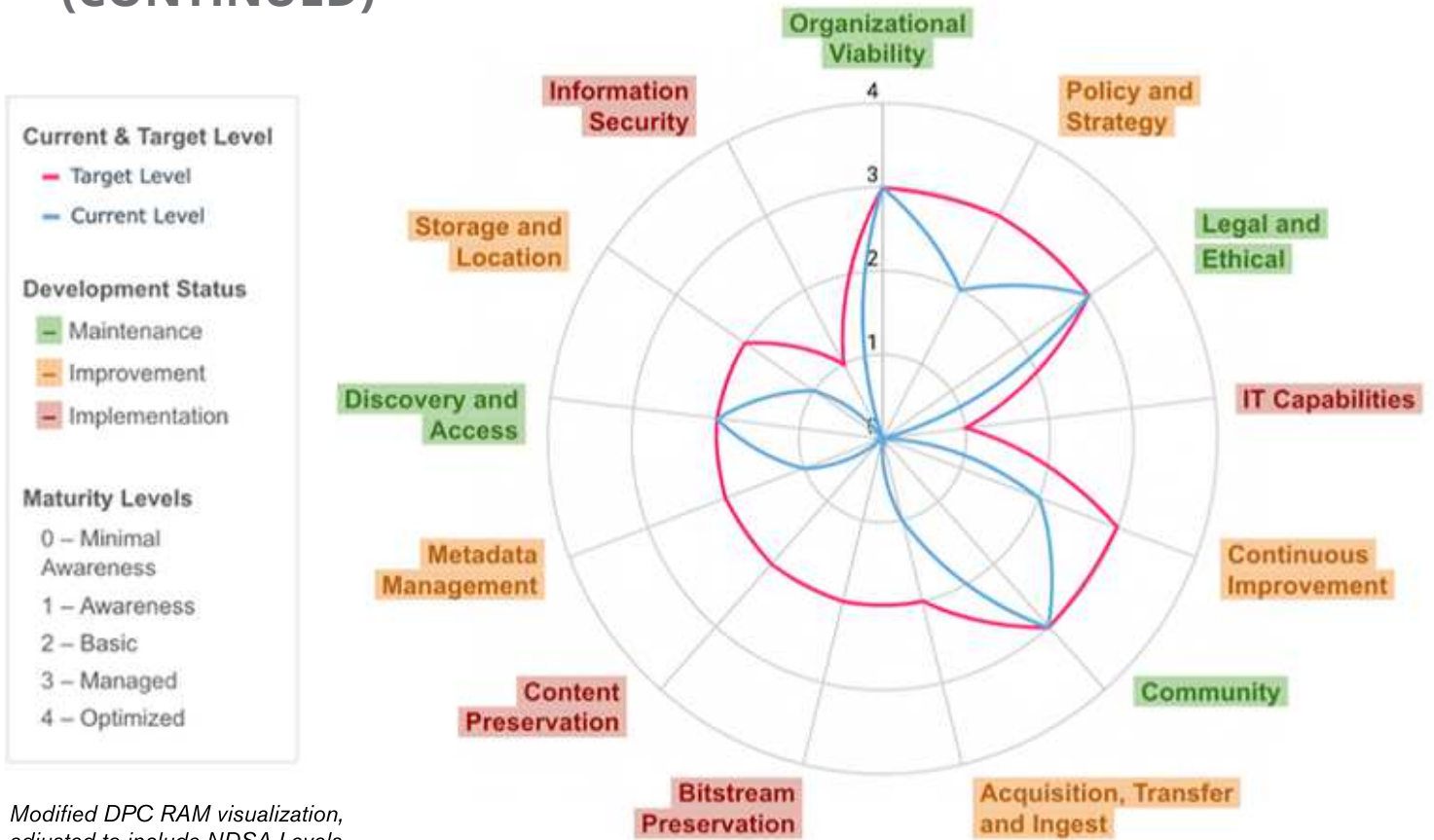
Some consideration has been given to these elements, but significant improvements need to be made. The five elements at the improvement level include: (a) policy and strategy; (b) continuous improvement; (c) acquisition, transfer, and ingest; (d) metadata management; and (e) storage and location. Improvement in these areas will focus heavily on formalizing procedures, creating documentation, and improving consistency — all of which require time and staff hours. Many of the elements at this stage depend on the completion of tasks in the implementation stage, so priority will be given to addressing those first.

### Maintenance

An acceptable level has already been reached, and these elements will not be a main focus of the current strategy. The four elements at the maintenance level are: (a) organizational viability, (b) legal and ethical considerations, (c) community involvement, and (d) discovery and access. These elements represent areas where The ArQuives' preexisting strengths in community engagement and ethics align with digital preservation goals. Maintenance-level elements rely more on ethical positioning and existing infrastructure rather than on new technologies.

# CAPABILITIES ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

Table A: Digital Preservation Maturity Assessment and Targets of The ArQuives, 2025–2027



Modified DPC RAM visualization, adjusted to include NDSA Levels (information security) and development status. The table shows current and desired digital preservation capabilities by 2027. This chart is a visual representation of the information in Appendix A.

To read this chart: The radar chart displays the current level of each element in blue and the desired level by the end of the strategy in pink. Levels range from 0 (minimal awareness) to 4 (fully optimized). The colour of each element indicates its current stage of development.

No element is expected to reach the highest maturity level (Level 4) in the timeframe of this strategy. This expectation does not suggest that the highest level is unattainable, but rather that attaining this level within the two years period covered by this strategy is not a realistic goal. To reach Level 4 on all categories in the long term, the following elements are required: (a) commitment to digital preservation from all levels of The ArQuives, including the board, membership, staff, and volunteers; (b) time to implement and fine-tune processes and programs implemented by this strategy; (c) consistent staffing to ensure knowledge continuity; and (d) stable funding to ensure uninterrupted digital storage.

Refer to Appendix A for a text-readable version of Table A and for more specifics on what is needed to further develop each digital preservation element.

# DIGITIZATION PRIORITIES

HIGH PRIORITY	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sectors and Themes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ QTIBPOC community members and community groups</li> <li>→ 2-Spirit and Queer First Nations, Metis, and Inuit community members and community groups</li> <li>→ The LGBT Purge and military experiences</li> <li>→ Newcomers, refugees, and undocumented experiences</li> <li>→ Sex work</li> <li>→ Trans, Non-Binary, and Intersex experiences</li> <li>→ Asexual Spectrum, Bisexual, Lesbian, and Pansexual experiences</li> <li>→ Children and Youth experiences (under 30)</li> <li>→ Current student grassroots activism</li> <li>→ Religious — Indigenous beliefs and spirituality, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Heathen, Pagan, Sikh, Hindu, Ba'hai, Jain</li> <li>→ French language and other non-English materials</li> <li>→ 1800s–1950s experiences</li> <li>→ Underhoused experiences</li> <li>→ Canadian music and musicians</li> <li>→ Disability experiences: activism, art, and culture</li> <li>→ Feminist</li> <li>→ Socialist and Communist experiences and activism</li> <li>→ Union activism and experiences</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Geography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Rural experiences</li> <li>→ Northern experiences</li> <li>→ Alberta</li> <li>→ British Columbia</li> <li>→ Manitoba</li> <li>→ New Brunswick</li> <li>→ Newfoundland and Labrador</li> <li>→ Northwest Territories</li> <li>→ Nova Scotia</li> <li>→ Nunavut</li> <li>→ Prince Edward Island</li> <li>→ Quebec</li> <li>→ Saskatchewan</li> <li>→ Yukon</li> </ul> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Formats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Born digital records</li> <li>→ Photographs, 2000 to current</li> <li>→ Zines</li> <li>→ Website and social media captures</li> </ul>

**Table B: High Priority Collection Development Categories defined by The ArQuives' 2023–2027 Collection Development Plan**

# DIGITIZATION PRIORITIES

## (CONTINUED)

**Table C: Medium Priority Collection Development Categories defined by The ArQuives' 2023–2027 Collection Development Plan**

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT	
<p><b>Sectors and Themes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Seniors and elder activism</li> <li>→ Sports (including dance)</li> <li>→ Women's experiences</li> </ul>	<p><b>Geography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Ontario, Outside Downtown Toronto</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Formats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Machine readable</li> <li>→ Photographs, 1990-2000</li> </ul>

**Table D: Low Priority Collection Development Categories defined by The ArQuives' 2023–2027 Collection Development Plan**

LOW PRIORITY	
<p><b>Sectors and Themes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Pornography (cisgender, white, gay)</li> <li>→ 1979-1989 Toronto experiences</li> <li>→ Upper-middle to upper-class experiences</li> </ul>	<p><b>Geography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Downtown Toronto</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Formats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ International large press fiction and non-fiction (including international biographies)</li> <li>→ Large format art books</li> <li>→ International large distribution films</li> <li>→ High circulating Canadian and international newspapers</li> </ul>

# DIGITIZATION PRIORITIES

## (CONTINUED)

### Defining Priorities

Digitization priorities will be aligned with the Collection Development Plan for 2023–2027. This document defines each collection as “High,” “Medium,” or “Low” priority based on its subject matter, geography, and format. These priorities were developed in consultation with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE).

Three additional elements will be considered alongside the collection development priorities:

1. *Research value*: Materials that are frequently requested and would benefit from increased accessibility and decreased physical handling.
2. *Materials being sent off-site*: Materials being moved to off-site storage will be digitized before shipping.
3. *At-risk and last-copy*: Materials whose physical carriers are at risk of degradation (e.g., showing signs of vinegar syndrome), and materials with only a single copy.

Other materials should be digitized as time and resources allow. These priority guidelines are subject to change based on ongoing community feedback.

# DIGITIZATION PRIORITIES (CONTINUED)

## Collections to be Digitized

Considering the priorities outlined above, the following 17 collections have been identified as top priorities for digitization:

- 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations collection
- Amy Gottlieb fonds
- Anton Wagner and Edimburgo Cabrera fonds
- Community Homophile Association of Toronto fonds
- Danny Cockerline fonds
- Demetrio Salazar (Maria Del Monte) fonds
- Melissa Levin fonds
- Mirha-Soleil Ross fonds
- Khush: South Asian Gay Men of Toronto fonds
- Association pour les droits des gai(e)s du Québec
- Queers Against Israeli Apartheid fonds
- Richard Fung fonds
- Rico Rodriguez fonds
- Susan J. Wells fonds
- University of Toronto Homophile Association fonds
- Eaton Hamilton fonds
- Women Against Violence Against Women

## Born-Digital Collections to be Processed

Many digital collections will be processed as a result of this strategy. These collections include approximately 10 TBs of born-digital records and digitized materials, including .pdf, .mp3, .mp4, .wav, .csv, and proprietary file types. The following 12 collections have been identified as top priorities for digital processing:

- Bri Watson asexuality articles (2020–2022)
- Catherine Mateo: *Gender Queeries*
- Centre for Women and Trans People at York University
- Desh Pardesh fonds
- Drawing Queer and Trans Families collection
- Escondidos No More fonds
- Maelys McArdle
- Queer Songbook Orchestra fonds
- Salaam Canada fonds
- Shawn Dearn: *The True Story of Canada's LGBT Purge* podcast
- Stephanie Hammond
- Walter Cassidy

# **DIGITIZATION PROCESSES**

## **Formats**

Digitization will be performed both internally and externally. Internal processing will be done by staff, interns, students, and volunteers of The ArQuives. In cases of unusual formats, overwhelming volume, or other unique circumstances, The ArQuives will send materials to external vendors for digitization. As per the Digital Preservation Policy, all external vendors will be thoroughly vetted to ensure they meet the organization's quality standards.

The ArQuives has the digital equipment and capabilities to process the following formats in-house:

- Artworks
- Born-digital materials
- Cassette tapes
- CDs and DVDs
- Photographs
- Small physical objects
- Textual documents
- VHS tapes
- Vinyl records
- Betamax (lower confidence)
- MiniDV (lower confidence)
- U-Matic (lower confidence)

Workflows either already exist or will be developed for these formats to provide detailed, step-by-step instructions for digitization.

## **Quality Benchmarks**

Digitization will be performed at the highest possible level of quality given available resources, as this serves the greatest number of purposes. Materials that have been previously digitized at a subpar quality level will not be re-digitized unless the quality of the digital surrogate is completely unusable, as this adds significant labour and cost.

Using the Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) Star System as a quality guide, The ArQuives aims to reach three-star imaging quality, defined as “a very good professional image that is appropriate for most uses.” The lowest acceptable level is two-star quality, the “minimally acceptable rating for most professional digitization activity.” Four-star imaging, the highest level, is not currently desirable or achievable, as it requires the most state-of-the-art equipment, and FADGI itself cautions against striving for this level for all but the most sophisticated digitization programs. The latest version of FADGI (Third Edition) was used in developing this strategy, but the latest version will be followed if a new edition is released.

# DIGITAL STORAGE & ACCESS

Although it is easy to assume that publishing something online means it will last forever, digital materials are often at greater risk of disappearing, being damaged, or becoming inaccessible than physical materials.

The volatile nature of the internet can make it difficult to retrieve materials even just a few years after they are published.

For this reason, digital collections will be placed in a digital preservation system with careful consideration given to privacy, description, and metadata, with access copies available online where appropriate.

## Digital Preservation System

A digital preservation system will be implemented as part of this strategy to standardize preservation through scheduled fixity checks, managed format migrations, and standardized metadata fields to maintain digital file integrity. It will also allow The ArQuives to create access copies of file formats not currently available to researchers.

Digital materials uploaded to the digital preservation system will be prioritized in the same way as the digitization priorities outlined in this document. Additional priority will be given to any materials that are not accessible elsewhere online.

## Access and Privacy

The ArQuives prioritizes the safety and privacy of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and will not compromise these values in the name of broader availability. Not all digitized materials will be published online. In some cases, The ArQuives may withhold materials from the public due to legal, ethical, or privacy concerns. The Takedown and Copyright Policy will be referred to should users or rights holders raise concerns. Donors have full control over the access levels granted to their materials, and these restrictions will be honoured during the digitization and publishing processes.

As per the current system, digitized materials will continue to be added to The ArQuives' digital database and digital exhibits whenever access restrictions allow. Online materials will be made as accessible as possible for users through screen readability, optical character recognition (OCR), metadata, and alt text for images. Individual researchers may request additional support to meet their accessibility needs.

As specified in the Digital Preservation Policy, digital materials will be hosted exclusively on Canadian servers. Detailed information about server infrastructure or security systems will not be disclosed for safety and privacy reasons; however, other archival institutions or professionals with specific inquiries are welcome to contact The ArQuives directly for more information.

## Metadata and Description

Digital descriptions and metadata will be created in accordance with the Collection Description Policy. In alignment with the Digital Preservation Policy, all digital metadata will follow Dublin Core standards, and the *Homosaurus* will be used as a reference for both descriptions and metadata.

# GOALS

The ArQuives has set the following goals to improve its digital preservation and digitization over the next two years and beyond:

1	<b>Implement a Digital Preservation System</b>
	<i>Choose, implement, and begin using a digital preservation system.</i>
2	<b>Set up the Digital Lab</b>
	<i>Create a versatile on-site digitization station.</i>
3	<b>Train Staff and Volunteers</b>
	<i>Give training on digital preservation and digitization.</i>
4	<b>Digitize Collections</b>
	<i>Increase digitization of physical materials.</i>
5	<b>Acquire Born-Digital Collections</b>
	<i>Acquire more born-digital materials from high-priority groups.</i>
6	<b>Process Digital Collections</b>
	<i>Process more of the high-priority digital collections.</i>
7	<b>Increase Access to Digital Materials</b>
	<i>Make digital materials more accessible to users.</i>
8	<b>Increase Digital Preservation Maturity Level</b>
	<i>Reach the target maturity level for all digital preservation elements.</i>

# GOALS (CONTINUED)

## Short-Term Goals: Years 1–2

This strategy establishes a strong foundation for digital preservation and digitization through publicly accessible collection strategy documentation and internally used policies, procedures, and workflows. This will increase capacity to receive digital collections, conduct mass digitization, and provide 2SLGBTQIA+ communities with increased access to digital collections.

These goals align closely with the mission of Library and Archives Canada's (LAC) Documentary Heritage Communities Program (DHCP) grant, the primary sponsor of this strategy development project, to help local cultural heritage organizations increase access to and awareness of their holdings, and to increase their storage and preservation capacity.

The ArQuives will also benefit from a significant increase in capacity during the first two years of this strategy thanks to funding from the Council of Library & Information Resources' (CLIR) *Digitizing Hidden Collections: Amplifying Unheard Voices* grant for the project titled, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Intersections within 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities*. The following goals have been adjusted to account for this increased budget and labour force.

<b>1</b>	<b>Implement a Digital Preservation System</b>
<p>The ArQuives will select, purchase, and implement a digital preservation system, and develop processes for ingesting, retrieving, and prioritizing materials. The initial ingests will be small test projects to refine workflows, with a target of 1–2 TBs of material uploaded within the first two years of this strategy.</p>	

<b>2</b>	<b>Set up the Digital Lab</b>
<p>The ArQuives will establish a digital lab that can digitize all formats outlined in the Digitization Processes section. Clear processes and procedures for each type of hardware and software will be developed.</p>	

# GOALS (CONTINUED)

<b>3</b>	<b>Train Staff and Volunteers</b>
<p>The ArQuives will train five staff members and a minimum of 12 volunteers in digitization and digital preservation to a functional or intermediate level, depending on their role. This will also help fulfill The ArQuives' commitment to providing more learning opportunities for community heritage workers.</p>	

<b>4</b>	<b>Digitize Collections</b>
<p>The ArQuives will digitize materials to expand access to 2SLGBTQIA+ records and protect physical materials from wear. The collections to be digitized are outlined in the Digitization Priorities section. The first two years will help fine-tune digitization processes, and the third year will include a review of the first two years and adjustments to goals and procedures as needed.</p> <p>The CLIR grant will support the digitization of two large collections: The Anton Wagner and Edimburgo Cabrera fonds and The Melissa Levin fonds. Together, these collections consist of approximately 1,000 audiovisual materials, 1,100 photographs, 150 cm of textual records, and various other artifacts.</p>	

<b>5</b>	<b>Acquire Born-Digital Collections</b>
<p>The ArQuives will acquire high-priority born-digital materials that will expand the collection and provide more 2SLGBTQIA+ resources to users. The ArQuives aims to add five high-priority born-digital collections to The ArQuives in 2026, with the number of acquisitions increasing annually. This growth target reflects the exponential increase in digital record creation and the increased visibility of The ArQuives' acquisition priorities with the publication of this strategy and active outreach to collect born-digital materials from high-priority groups.</p> <p>New collections will be acquired through donations, and will be targeted based on strategies outlined in the <a href="#">Collection Development Plan</a>. To facilitate this goal, a guide will be created that informs potential donors about the types of materials The ArQuives accepts, how to prepare a donation, and other key details.</p>	

YEAR	NUMBER OF HIGH-PRIORITY COLLECTIONS DIGITIZED
2026	5
2027	7
2028+	4

YEAR	NUMBER OF HIGH-PRIORITY BORN-DIGITAL COLLECTIONS ACQUIRED
2026	5
2027	6
2028+	7

# GOALS (CONTINUED)

YEAR	NUMBER OF HIGH-PRIORITY BORN-DIGITAL COLLECTIONS PROCESSED
2026	4
2027	5
2028+	3

6	Process Digital Collections
<p>The ArQuives will process more high-priority digital collections to improve accessibility and preservation. Nine collections will be processed within the first two years of this strategy, with this number decreasing in year three as the CLIR grant ends. Year three will also serve as a review period to evaluate and adjust processes, goals, and other metrics as needed.</p>	

7	Increase Access to Digital Materials
<p>The ArQuives will leverage newly digitized and processed digital collections to increase online accessibility of 2SLGBTQIA+ materials. This will be measured by visitation and engagement metrics on The ArQuives' digital platforms. Quantitative benchmarks and targets for engagement metrics have not yet been established, as a digital preservation system has not yet been implemented.</p>	

8	Increase Digital Preservation Maturity Level
<p>The ArQuives will increase its level of digital preservation maturity for the 13 elements outlined in the Capabilities Analysis section. There are four elements to be implemented (IT capabilities, bitstream preservation, content preservation, and information security) and five to be improved (policy and strategy; continuous improvement; acquisition, transfer, and ingest; metadata management; and storage and location). The analysis will be conducted again at the end of 2026 to assess target achievement and determine new goals for each element.</p>	

# GOALS

## (CONTINUED)

### Long-Term Goals: Years 3+

The long-term outcomes of this strategy include the establishment of stable digital preservation standards and sustained access to digital materials for future generations of researchers. Capacity will decrease after the first two years of the strategy due to the CLIR grant finishing, but digitization and digital preservation will continue to be a priority.

Over time, this strategy is expected to increase engagement with digital materials, generate more research queries across multiple channels (phone, email, social media, and in-house), and promote greater awareness of the collections among the general public through social media campaigns, digital exhibitions, and publications.

Improved workflows and training will better equip staff and volunteers to effectively acquire, preserve, and provide access to both born-digital and digitized collections. The strategy also enables The ArQuives to highlight underrepresented provincial and territorial materials in alignment with the [Collection Development Plan](#).

Proactive recruitment of born-digital materials will begin after the first two years of this strategy, focusing on acquiring at-risk digital materials. Born-digital donations have a low barrier to participation because materials can be donated easily through digital transfer, from any location, and both parties can retain a copy. This will allow faster acquisition because digital materials can be preserved and shared more quickly than physical collections.

The continued success of this strategy will depend on the board's recognition of digital preservation as a core, ongoing responsibility of The ArQuives rather than a one-time project. The board has demonstrated alignment with this priority and identified digital preservation as a key focus for the next five years in the [Collection Development Plan](#).

# MEASURING SUCCESS

## **The ArQuives will monitor the success of the Digital Preservation & Digitization Strategy using several methods:**

- Surveys of users, community members, staff, and volunteers will assess satisfaction with, and the overall success of, the strategy in 2026.
- For digitized materials, accession records will be updated to indicate that digital surrogates are available, which will allow for year-over-year measurement of progress toward digitizing high-priority collections.
- The ArQuives will also track which high-priority born-digital collections have been processed to assess progress.
- Engagement metrics on digital platforms will be reviewed to assess whether access to digital materials has increased over time.

# REPORTING

As part of each Annual Report, The ArQuives will measure progress based on the goals set in this plan. Copies of the Annual Report will be made available on The ArQuives website for at least five years.

At the end of 2026, the Executive Director and Board of Directors will review the Digital Preservation & Digitization Strategy. With staff and volunteer assistance, the Executive Director will create an updated strategy based on the project's successes and challenges, and incorporate any necessary adjustments.

# CONCLUSION

**This Digital Preservation and Digitization Strategy provides a roadmap for safeguarding 2SLGBTQIA+ histories and ensuring their long-term preservation and access. As threats to digital materials grow, alongside an ever-increasing number of born-digital records, this strategy will guide the development of procedures, systems, and community-guided priorities.**

The strategy defines what materials will be digitized and processed, how and where that will take place (internally or externally), and when it will be completed, including targets for the next two years. It also analyses The ArQuives' current competencies in digital preservation and digitization, and outlines how these will develop over the span of the strategy.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Land Acknowledgement:

The ArQuives is located on the lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe and the Huron-Wendat. Today, Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across North America and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

The ArQuives strive to gather the stories of the unheard and silenced voices of the 2SLGBTQIA+ First Peoples of this land. We acknowledge that some stories have already been lost, and we aim to ensure that those that remain and those that are to come are preserved for the future.

## DHCP Grant:

The development of this strategy was supported by funding from Library and Archives Canada's (LAC) Documentary Heritage Communities Program (DHCP) grant. This program helps document Canada's history so that it can be shared with current and future generations.

## Reviewers:

Aino Pihlak, PhD Candidate, University of Toronto  
Axelle Demus, FOCAS Postdoctoral Fellow in Community Archives & Accessibility, McGill University  
Brett Lougheed, University Archivist & Digital Curator, University of Winnipeg  
Dusty Green, Founder, The Queer Heritage Initiative of New Brunswick  
Jessica Lapp, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto  
K.J. Rawson, Professor, Northeastern University & Director, Digital Transgender Archive  
Michael Radmacher, Transgender Archives Metadata Librarian, University of Victoria Libraries  
Nailisa Tanner, Digital Collections Librarian, McGill University  
Patrick Taylor, Collections Specialist, The ArQuives  
Sarah Lake, Digital Preservation Librarian, Concordia University  
Stefanie Martin, Archivist, The ArQuives

**Copy Editors:** Nico Mara-McKay, Sydney Gautreau

**Translation:** Aurélie Petit

**Graphic Design:** Syriah Bailey

## Written by:

Natasha Fisher, Digital Archivist, The ArQuives  
Raegan M. Swanson, Executive Director, The ArQuives

# REFERENCES

Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA). 2017. "Association of Canadian Archivists Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct." <https://archivists.ca/Code-of-Ethics-and-Professional-Conduct>.

Digital Preservation Coalition (DCP). 2024. *Digital Preservation Coalition Rapid Assessment Model (DPC RAM), Version 3*. <http://doi.org/10.7207/dpcram24-03>.

Levels of Digital Preservation Working Group. 2019. "Levels of Digital Preservation." National Digital Stewardship Alliance: Digital Library Federation. <https://ndsa.org/publications/levels-of-digital-preservation/>.

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). 2014. "Strategy for Digitizing Archival Materials Public Access, 2015-2024." <https://www.archives.gov/digitization/strategy.html>.

Rieger, Thomas, Kristin A. Phelps, Hana Beckerle, Tanya Brown, Rachel Frederick, Sarah Mitrani, et al., eds. 2023. *Technical Guidelines for Digitizing Cultural Heritage Materials: Third Edition*. Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI). [https://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/FADGITechnicalGuidelinesforDigitizingCulturalHeritageMaterials\\_ThirdEdition\\_05092023.pdf](https://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/FADGITechnicalGuidelinesforDigitizingCulturalHeritageMaterials_ThirdEdition_05092023.pdf).

# APPENDIX A

Using the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's (NDSA) Levels of Digital Preservation and the Digital Preservation Coalition's Rapid Assessment Model (DPC RAM) as benchmarking frameworks, the following table explains each element of The ArQuives' current capacity level and provides an explanation of what is needed to reach its desired level.

For the 2026–2027 strategy, each of the 13 digital preservation elements fall into one of these three statuses:

**Implementation**

**Improvement**

**Maintenance**

Digital Preservation Element		Current Level	Desired Level	Description
A	<b>Organizational Viability</b> Governance, organizational structure, staffing, and resourcing of digital preservation activities.	3	3	The ArQuives recognizes the importance of digital preservation and has committed both financial and managerial resources to support this work. A Digital Archivist is on staff and is responsible for all digital preservation tasks. No additional development is needed at this time.
B	<b>Policy and Strategy</b> Policies, strategies, and procedures that govern the operation and management of the digital archive.	2	3	A digital preservation policy and strategy are in place. To strengthen this element, further staff training, additional procedural workflows, and more hands-on experience are needed.
C	<b>Legal and Ethical</b> Management of legal, social, and cultural rights and responsibilities; compliance with relevant regulation; and adherence to codes of ethics related to acquiring, preserving, and providing access to digital content.	3	3	The ArQuives is thorough and proactive about its legal and ethical responsibilities. Community engagement is a primary focus. The ArQuives adheres to the Association of Canadian Archivists' (ACA) Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. No additional development is needed.
D	<b>IT Capabilities</b> Information technology capabilities for supporting digital preservation activities.	0	1	IT capabilities are very limited as there is no dedicated IT professional on staff. Additional budget is needed to hire a professional on a project-based or short-term basis.
E	<b>Continuous Improvement</b> Processes for the assessment of current digital preservation capabilities, the definition of goals, and the monitoring of progress.	2	3	Multiple assessments have been conducted to evaluate the current state of digital preservation at The ArQuives. Ongoing reassessments are built into the digital preservation policy and strategy. This area is expected to improve naturally over time as reassessments are completed.

# APPENDIX A

## (CONTINUED)

Digital Preservation Element		Current Level	Desired Level	Description
F	<b>Community</b> Engagement with and contribution to the wider digital preservation community.	3	3	With the appointment of a Digital Archivist, The ArQuives has increased its involvement in the wider digital preservation community. The ArQuives and its staff are involved in many professional organizations, including the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) Digital Preservation Working Group (DPWG). These connections provide access to expertise and support for current and future digital preservation efforts, and allow The ArQuives to share its own resources with the community. No additional development is needed.
G	<b>Acquisition, Transfer, and Ingest</b> Processes to acquire or transfer content and ingest it into a digital archive.	1	2	The ArQuives currently performs acquisition, transfer, and ingest tasks at a basic level. However, formalized documentation and workflows are needed to improve this area. Development will require staff hours for developing procedures and training volunteers.
H	<b>Bitstream Preservation</b> Processes to ensure the storage and integrity of digital content to be preserved.	0	2	Bitstream preservation is not currently a part of The ArQuives' process. This will be implemented via the digital preservation system, which will automatically manage fixity checks and related tasks.
I	<b>Content Preservation</b> Processes to preserve the meaning, usability, and functionality of the digital content over time.	0	2	No content preservation processes are currently in place. To develop this area, The ArQuives will need to dedicate staff hours to establishing basic workflows, including a preferred file format registry.
J	<b>Metadata Management</b> Processes to create and maintain sufficient metadata to support preservation, discovery, and use of preserved digital content.	1	2	The ArQuives recognizes the importance of metadata management and has a basic understanding of its principles. Improvements will be made through new processes and software (i.e., digital preservation software).
K	<b>Discovery and Access</b> Processes to enable discovery of digital content and provide access for users.	2	2	The ArQuives is proactive in providing access to its collections. Where permissions allow, materials are accessible through various platforms, including digital exhibitions, a digital database, and on-site consultations. No additional development is needed at this time.
L	<b>Storage and Location</b> Diversification of storage locations and mediums to avoid data loss and obsolescence.	1	2	The ArQuives understands the importance of diverse, reliable digital storage and has partnered with an external provider to securely back up third copies of digital materials on magnetic tape. However, not all materials currently have a third or even a second copy, and addressing this gap will require time and staff hours.
M	<b>Information Security</b> Managing who has access to read, write, and edit digital materials.	0	1	Currently, there is no formal documentation identifying who has read, write, move, or delete permissions for digital files. There are also no standards in place for authorizing access to individual files. This area requires staff hours to develop appropriate access control.

# APPENDIX B

Definitions of digital preservation and digitization terms used throughout this document. Adapted from the *[Digital Preservation Coalition Handbook Glossary](#)*.

**Born-Digital** – Materials originating in a digital format with no analog equivalent. This term differentiates from those materials created as a result of converting analog originals to digital files through digitization.

**Digital Material** – A broad term for any digital file, either born-digital or created through digitization.

**Digital Preservation** – The processes, policies, and other managed activities involved in ensuring long-term access to digital materials, despite media failure, technological change, or organizational shifts. It includes preserving born-digital content and digital surrogates in their most authentic form.

**Digital Preservation System** – A platform used to manage, preserve, and provide access to digital materials.

**Digitization** – The process of converting analog materials into digital materials through scanning, photographing, disk imaging, or other methods, creating digital surrogates.

**File Format Registry** – A document outlining the file formats that can be preserved by the organization at high, medium, and low confidence levels.

**Fixity Checks** – The process of verifying the integrity of a digital file by confirming it has not been altered or corrupted. This is done by generating a checksum code which is compared periodically against itself to detect any changes.

**Metadata** – Information describing different aspects of digital materials, such as creation date or file title. Metadata is required to manage and preserve digital materials over time and assist in ensuring essential contextual, historical, and technical information are preserved along with the digital object.