Description  A collaborative multi-phased pilot to archive Canadian government documents using DSpace

Participants  The Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), a 20 member consortium, is working with municipalities, special and community college libraries.

Objectives  To address long standing and widespread concerns about the rapid rate of disappearance of electronic government documents, as well as the desire for greater efficiencies possible through shared cataloguing and archiving.

Methodology  Focused short term working groups explore a wide range of issues.

Timeframe  The concerns are long standing amongst OCUL members. Work with DSpace began in 2004. A public launch is planned for September 2005.

Canadian Environmental Scan

- There is forthcoming federal legislation that will include e-documents in the mandatory depository program. No such legislation exists or is proposed for Ontario. The Municipal Freedom of Information Protection of Privacy Act (1990) provides some support for public access and archiving.

- Copyright for Canadian government documents is complex. Individual government units hold copyright and have variant policies re use and archiving.

- Ontario academic libraries vary greatly in existing relationships with local government and public libraries, government documents collections and cataloging practices. Some are printing electronic government documents. Some are listing digital government documents in library catalogues.

- 45 responses were received to postings on municipal government, archival provincial and national library, listservs, inviting comments about current activities or suggestions for future initiatives. Contact was made with groups such as the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, the Canadian Initiative for Digital Libraries, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries, and the Archives Association of Ontario:
  - Library and Archives Canada (LAC) has started archiving digital federal documents and intends to continue. The Bibliocentre, a consortium of Ontario community college libraries, automatically creates a brief cataloguing record for titles on the depository checklist which are electronically archived at LAC.
  - There is no provincial initiative to coordinate the cataloguing and archiving of electronic municipal government documents, though many people – municipal councilors and clerks, archivists, records managers, public librarians and others thought it was an excellent idea. Some municipalities do not currently index or archive electronic documents at all, some are in the planning stages, some microfiche, and some have online systems in place for public access. A few standard applications are in use in some municipalities, such as Laserfiche and OMNIRIM, and the TOMRMS classification scheme.
Provincial Documents

2004
The University of Western Ontario submits a few government documents to OCUL’s DSpace test server to begin assessing DSpace’s appropriateness.

The Legislative Library of Ontario (LLO) approaches OCUL about a possible partnership. LLO selectively archives digital documents. Items were migrated to pdf, stored on a library server and fully catalogued. Since only a small proportion of digital documents are being captured, LLO sees collaboration as a way of increasing coverage cost effectively. Archiving is also part of provincial e-government initiatives. A distributed submission model is envisioned with shared responsibility initially between OCUL and the LLO.

2005
Approx. 800 LLO “monographs” are successfully batch loaded onto test server.

A practicum student (Allyson Fox) samples LLO e-serials to evaluate batch loading using the LoC MARC / Dublin Core crosswalk. Serials are successively sampled for attributes such regular or irregular frequency, similarity with print edition, etc. Integrative resources (such as continuations, regulations) were not sampled at this time. A working group reviews the resulting Dublin Core and original MARC records. LLO issues a single MARC record for both print and electronic versions, hence some fields require manual editing or automatic suppression. For example, the date field refers to the print edition. Editing is fairly simple and hence could be done by someone without cataloging experience. The balance between suppressing fields and editing individual records is still under discussion.

A formal agreement for joint archiving between OCUL and LLO is drafted for approval in Fall 2005. Under the proposed terms, LLO will be responsible for monographic archiving. OCUL members will share the archiving of provincial serials. A central OCUL server will be used. Self submission by government agencies will be explored at a later date.

September 2005 is set as the target date to make 9,000 items from LLO publicly available on Ozone, OCUL’s DSpace installation: ozone.scholarsportal.info

Since this collection is being “seeded” by an existing LLO collection with pre-determined collection development, description and preservation policies, discussions between the new partners on developing a set of common policies and standards have been iterative.

Federal Documents

Sample records from Bibliocentre are loaded onto test server.
Discussions regarding sharing records are underway.
Collaboratively Archiving Canadian Electronic Government Documents
A Pilot in Progress

Municipal Documents

In December 2004, a separate subgroup is charged with investigating municipal documents.

- The project aims to provide province-wide access to previously digitized information, as opposed to focusing on the initial preservation (or creation) or digital objects.

- The repository will not be an official archive or house a comprehensive collection; rather, it will selective, provided on a volunteer basis by each municipality. Selection will be the shared responsibility of municipal, public and academic library staff. Municipal corporate documents such as minutes, internal memos, supporting documentation, voicemails and email will not be targeted at this time. Council minutes, policy and planning documents, reports and by-laws will be.

- Six OCUL staff mount a few sample municipals documents into DSpace to assess appropriateness.

- An extended pilot is planned for the Fall 2005 to Spring 2006 of ten municipalities. City officials and public library staff are invited to participate. Working group members are charged with recruiting, briefing, training and supporting staff in their geographic area. Hence, the municipal pilot will test mediated and self (city staff) submission models. The amount of metadata review needed is still being explored.

- The working group will also pursue a closer relationship with AMCTO and the Archives Association of Ontario (in particular the Municipal Archives Interest Group (MAIG)), to draft provincial policy and/or standards for the cataloguing and archiving of municipal government e-publications.

http://www

“Each day that the problems of electronic preservation and permanent public access go unresolved, alarming amounts of government information continue to be lost... The continuous and cumulative effects of this ongoing catastrophe are to ... impair the public's ability to use government information already collected and compiled, to waste public and private resources in having to duplicate efforts to retrieve information previously available but now lost, and to allow the historical record of the nation to literally vanish before our eyes. Moreover, it severely undermines the potential promise and usefulness of new electronic technologies when the long-term consequence of their use is an ever-widening breach in our collected knowledge and information bank.” O'Mahony, D. P. (1998). Here today, gone tomorrow Advances in Librarianship 22, 107-21.

“Can a research library with historic collection strengths ... state and federal government information, for example, continue to stake claims to pre-eminence without keeping its collections current and thus tackling the ... 65 percent of government publications that are currently produced exclusively in electronic form? The answer is no. Greenstein, D. (2004) Research Libraries’ Cost of Doing Business (and Strategies for Avoiding Them) Educause Review 39, 72-3.
Working Groups’ Software Evaluation

- Ready made for accepting deposits of electronic documents and organizing them into collections.
- Built-in review process
- Checksums
- Permanent url
- Participating libraries can work either in MARC or Dublin Core and therefore not change work flow or practices
- Self archiving by government agencies could be explored given submission ease.

But

- Handles some formats better (pdf) than others (complex digital objects)
- Some concerns about usability (ease) of submission process
- No duplicate item detection
- No copy record functionality
- No spellcheck…

Lessons Learned

1. A collaborative and breadth first approach allows libraries to support new archiving initiatives without additional funding by extending current technical infrastructure and utilizing existing staff.
2. Seeding the collection, pilots and student practica helped move the project forward as did small focused working groups drawing on varied expertise and institutions.
3. Sequencing of tasks, policy decisions and pace of interlinked varies.
4. Most of the work can be done by email and conference calls.
5. Many questions still remain…