

Richard Provencher (R.P.)

Leslie, you were recently named the new Librarian and Archivist of Canada. So first of all, what attracted you to this position?

Leslie Weir (L.W.)

Well, what an incredible team there is at Library and Archives Canada. And, to be honest, I've worked with Library and Archives Canada over a number of years, as the university librarian at the University of Ottawa and I've always been very impressed by the services, the collections, the role they play nationally and internationally and what better gig could there be for a librarian?

R.P.

So a lot has been accomplished in the last five years. You're new at this position. What do you hope to accomplish and continue?

L.W.

Well, I'm really excited to build on the legacy of Guy Berthiaume. Library and Archives Canada has done incredible work over the past five years, including in introducing a new union catalogue, Voilà, as well as innovative services such as Co-Lab and Digilab, that allow the public to engage with Canadian heritage. They have archived social media on important Canadian topics like the election. They've also done web archiving, where they've highlighted certain parts of [dot] ca. They have digitized all of the six hundred and forty thousand records of Canadian personnel who were in the expeditionary force in World War I. So, it's quite an incredible set of changes and developments that have happened in the services and collections of LAC and there's a huge opportunity there for me to build on those. A recent infographic tells us that, in fact, millennials read more than their parents and that's not what people commonly believe, and they also visit public libraries more than any other generation in the past. Last year, we set up a youth advisory council as a pilot so that we could engage with youth. It was a huge success and this year it's become a standard part of our advisory councils that we have in place to help us define the future of LAC.

R.P.

So you've come in at a really, really exciting time in your tenure as Librarian and Archivist of Canada. There are two major construction buildings going up. Tell us about those.

L.W.

So, we're building a new, state-of-the-art preservation centre right next to our existing landmark facility in Gatineau. It will be able to store in a, an emissions-free, green building, the heritage of Canada to save it for future generations. As exciting, and maybe even more exciting, we are in a strategic partnership with the Ottawa Public Library to build a new showcase facility that will be opening in early 2025. And this showcase facility will allow us to reach so many more Canadians, working with collaboration on our services and collections, with the Ottawa Public Library. The new

public library will allow us to receive about 1.7 million visitors per year and just to put that in context, currently we welcome about 30,000 people a year to 395 Wellington. It's very exciting for us to engage with a much wider range of Canadians. At the same time, the new public library will provide much greater access for the public to see original works and rarely seen items in our collections. We'll welcome new Canadians, entrepreneurs, youth, as well as our genealogists, historians and academics. It will be a thrilling place to be, to see, and to engage with Library and Archives Canada.

R.P.

Finally, one last question, and people are asking, why is LAC still relevant to Canadians?

L.W.

LAC is so relevant in today's world. We have the documentary heritage of Canada, the record of the federal government, this is what underpins democracy and civil debate in society. And, the more we can provide access to those collections through our services, the better Canada will be as a country for everyone who lives here.