

History of the British Columbia Archives

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- 1894 Legislative Library built. Afraid that records of the early days of the new province would be lost, the first librarian, R.E. Gosnell, mounts an advertising campaign asking for “reminiscences of pioneer settlement . . . old letters, journals, files of newspapers, books, pamphlets, reports, charts, maps, photographs, sketches and so on” (*Inland Sentinel*, June 1, 1894, 3), and begins to collect historical records.
- 1908 The Provincial Archives is founded as a separate agency. The archives continues to share space with the Legislative Library. British Columbia recognizes the importance of keeping archival records before other western provinces; the next western province to establish an archives is Saskatchewan in 1945.
- 1915 The Provincial Archives moves into its own designated space in the newly completed Provincial Library in the Legislature Buildings. The acquisition, organization and cataloguing of items is not systematic, and collections are not open to the general public.
- 1970 The Provincial Archives moves out of the Provincial Library into its present location. The archives had outgrown the Provincial Library, where every available space was filled with archival records.
- 1977 The Honourable Grace McCarthy officially opens the Emily Carr Gallery on Wharf Street, a satellite facility of the archives and showcase for archival paintings.
- 1982 A formal records management program is created within the BC government. It has a separate reporting structure but is closely allied with the Provincial Archives.
- 1988 The Provincial Archives and the government records management program are formally amalgamated as the British Columbia Archives and Records Service (BCARS). The new branch is an integrated records management and archives service.
- 1991 The Emily Carr Gallery on Wharf Street closes.



- 1996 BCARS and the Information and Privacy branches are merged to create the BC Information Management Services division. This includes Information and Analysis Service (records management and information and privacy) and the Archives and Information Access branch (traditional archival services).
- 2000 The BC Archives reassumes staff and responsibility for the corporate records management function within government from the Information and Data Management Branch. The remainder of the Information and Data Management Branch is renamed the Corporate Privacy and Information Access Branch, with staff and responsibility for privacy and the administration of Freedom of Information legislation.
- 2003 The Royal BC Museum Corporation is established, merging the Royal BC Museum, the BC Archives, Helmcken House and the Netherlands Carillon. The records management component of the BC Archives, renamed the Corporate Information Management Branch, moves to the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services. This branch is responsible for developing records schedules for and appraisal of government records.



Provincial Archivists

- 1908 R.E. Gosnell is appointed provincial archivist (as well as provincial librarian).
- 1910 Ethelbert O.S. Scholefield is appointed provincial archivist. Scholefield creates the first inventory of archival holdings and actively collects government records from various regional centres. Today, a giant copper beech tree on the Legislature grounds honours his contributions.
- 1920 John Forsyth is appointed provincial archivist.
- 1926 John Hosie is appointed provincial archivist.
- 1933 Alma Russell retires. Though never officially appointed provincial archivist, Russell made many significant contributions to the provincial archives. Russell was the first professionally trained librarian in the province. Because of this training, she was tasked with creating the first system for cataloguing the archives. She created what we refer to as the colonial correspondence and old manuscript filing system. This system allowed the archives to be searched using catalogue cards and the collection was finally opened to the public. Russell was later appointed head of the archives collection.
- 1934 Dr. W. Kaye Lamb is appointed provincial archivist. He later serves as Dominion (i.e., national) archivist from 1948 to 1968.
- 1940 Willard Ireland is appointed provincial archivist. In 1946 he also becomes provincial librarian. He retires in 1974. His 34 years of service represent the longest tenure of any BC provincial archivist.
- 1974 The positions of provincial librarian and provincial archivist are permanently separated. Allan R. Turner (formerly provincial archivist of Saskatchewan) is appointed provincial archivist.
- 1979 John A. Bovey is appointed provincial archivist. Prior to his appointment, Bovey previously was provincial archivist of Manitoba and archivist of the Northwest Territories. He retires in 1998 after nineteen years.
- 1998 Gary A. Mitchell is appointed as the new provincial archivist. He retires in 2014 and the position of provincial archivist is dissolved.

