

Chapter 8

Department of Supply and Services - Provincial Archives of New Brunswick

Contents

Background	173
Scope	174
Results in brief	174
Mandate and mission	176
Scope of PANB operations	177
Resources provided to PANB	178
Policies and procedures	180
Records management policy	181
Assessment, arrangement and description of records	183
Storage conditions	185
Planned new repository	188
Conservation	189
Audio-visual storage media	190
Physical threats and security of facilities	192
Performance reporting by PANB	194

Department of Supply and Services - Provincial Archives of New Brunswick

Background

8.1 The Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB) has never been the subject of an audit by our Office. Based solely upon its expenditures, we would probably not choose to conduct an audit of this organization. The 2000-2001 *Main Estimates* show the budget for Provincial Archives is only \$1.475 million, of which the major cost is the salaries and benefits for 32.0 full time equivalent staff.

8.2 However, we feel it is important to look beyond expenditures when considering the importance of an organization. The information contained in the records preserved by PANB is, in effect, priceless. This is due to the intrinsic value and irreplaceable nature of that information. Birth and death records, audio recordings of historic provincial hearings, and the personal files of New Brunswick Premiers are among the diverse holdings of PANB. A failure to preserve these holdings would mean the potential loss of valuable historical, genealogical, and legal information. Additionally, due to the nature of the information preserved in the holdings of the Archives, there is a lot of public interest in the operation. Having a central repository of this information facilitates its retrieval as needed. Finally, but not insignificant, is the fact that some of the archived records would have a very high realizable value on the collectors' market.

8.3 PANB was established in 1967 under the *Archives Act*. The organization currently occupies four separate locations in the City of Fredericton. The Bonar Law Building on the UNB campus is the public access facility. The other locations are used for the storage of records, various archival activities, microfilming and photographic work. The operation is divided into three major sections including public records, private records, and audio-visual records. There is also a specialized conservation section headed by a conservator. Besides their archival duties, the public records section is also responsible for co-ordinating records management activities within the government of New Brunswick.

8.4 The staff of the Provincial Archives includes a number of professional archivists, some of whom are also heavily involved with national archival organizations. In fact, two of the five elected chairs of the Council of Canadian Archives, including the present one, have been employees of PANB. We were told that, in general, the staff of PANB consists of long-term residents of the Province who have a strong interest in its history. Consequently, they are committed to preserving and promoting public access to the records that document that history.

Scope

8.5 Our work at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick included detailed reviews of assessment, preservation, and related activities. This work included looking at the acquisition, appraisal, selection, arrangement, and description of records, as well as preservation risks as described below. It also included more general reviews of the mandate of the organization and performance reporting done by PANB along with some consideration of the accessibility of records. The objectives of our work were as follows:

- To ensure that the Provincial Archives has policies and procedures covering all aspects of record assessment, and that these policies and procedures are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- To ensure that these policies and procedures are in compliance with the *Archives Act* and organizational objectives.
- To ensure that records under the care of the Provincial Archives, as described in the *Archives Act*, are adequately protected. This would include ensuring that the Provincial Archives has adequately addressed the following preservation risks:
 - natural threats (light, moisture, heat, rodents, insects, acid content in paper, air pollution, nitrate in film, etc.)
 - records inaccessibility due to obsolete storage media
 - physical threats such as fire and other major disasters, vandalism, etc.
 - threats to the integrity of information
 - loss of records through theft, data loss, etc.
 - accidental damage or destruction of archival records by staff, volunteers, researchers, and others.
- To ensure that there is adequate storage space for archival records and an adequate system for identifying and locating stored records.
- To ensure that the mandate of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, as documented in the *Archives Act*, is clear and understood by staff.
- To ensure that appropriate, sufficient, and timely performance reporting is done by the Provincial Archives that allows stakeholders to assess the degree to which the organizational mission is being achieved.

Results in brief

8.6 The mandate of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB) is clear and understood by staff.

8.7 In our opinion, resources currently being provided to PANB are not sufficient to allow them to fully meet their mandate as described in the *Archives Act*. This lack of resources has led to large backlogs in archival processing of records, and a lack of time to address important administrative areas such as policy development, strategic planning, and performance reporting.

8.8 Six members of a staff of 32 will be retiring under the provincial Voluntary Early Retirement Window (VERW) program, including the Conservator and two other archivists. We feel that PANB should develop a succession plan to cover key staff who will be leaving PANB in the near future. We further feel that the Conservator's replacement should be appointed prior to the retirement of the current Conservator to allow adequate time for training and the transfer of knowledge.

8.9 PANB has developed policies and procedures to cover all aspects of operations. These policies and procedures appear to be in compliance with the *Archives Act* and consistent with organizational objectives. However, one key policy relating to conservation was drafted in 1997 but has not yet been finalized and adopted. Also, there is no regular review of policies and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the *Archives Act*, the PANB strategic plan, and current archival standards.

8.10 The government Records Management Policy appears to give PANB a policy-setting and overseeing role with regards to records management in government. However, PANB has not been provided with the tools to ensure that departments comply with existing policies. Consequently, there are some important parts of the policy with which departments are not fully complying, such as the requirement to file records retention schedules with PANB for all groups of records.

8.11 PANB is currently heading up an initiative to develop a government electronic records strategy in co-operation with government departments. We encourage the organization to continue in its efforts. The failure to address this area now will result in the loss of important electronic records in the future.

8.12 During our work, we noted that there is no ongoing tracking of statistics relating to day-to-day archival activity at PANB. We feel that a tracking system should be put in place. Data captured would yield valuable information for management decision-making and performance reporting purposes, and provide objective support for requests for additional resources.

8.13 All non-restricted records in the public records and audio-visual section are accessible to the public through finding aids.

However, in the private records section there are a significant number of records that are not. In our opinion, a plan should be developed to clear this backlog, thereby ensuring public access to all non-restricted holdings of PANB.

8.14 There are a number of deficiencies in the three storage facilities currently used by PANB that have and will continue to result in the loss of archival records. Pursuant to a proposal by PANB, funding was recently approved by the government for the design and construction of a new repository near the existing Bonar Law building during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 fiscal years. If properly designed, the new facility will meet the archival storage needs of PANB for the next fifteen years and address other current storage concerns.

8.15 We feel that the lack of a government-wide strategy for the management of audio-visual records may have led to increased costs to the Province along with the loss of some of these records. We are therefore recommending that PANB play a central role in developing and implementing an audio-visual records management strategy for the Province of New Brunswick. As part of that strategy, guidelines should be developed that will be applied by departments in managing their audio-visual records.

8.16 The PANB strategic plan was drafted in 1993 and has not been updated since then. We feel that it should be updated in the near future and understand that PANB intends to do this within the next year. To facilitate performance reporting, we feel that such an update should include developing a list of measurable strategic objectives for the organization.

8.17 PANB provides information on its annual operations through the annual report of the Department of Supply and Services. Performance reporting in the 1999-2000 report covered user satisfaction with services provided by PANB. It indicated that surveyed users were quite satisfied. This is a good start. However, we feel that performance indicators and targets should be set and reported upon to cover other key aspects of the operation such as acquisition, appraisal, selection, description, and preservation.

Mandate and mission

8.18 Section 5(1) of the *Archives Act* describes the duties of the Provincial Archivist as follows:

- (a) *to have the care, custody and control of the Archives;*
- (b) *to prepare records schedules governing the retention, destruction and transfer of public records to the Archives;*
- (c) *to provide economical storage facilities for public records and to encourage the use of such facilities;*

(d) to encourage the use by departments and municipalities of modern records storage and classification systems in order to ensure that important policies and programs are documented and that public records are protected against deterioration, loss and destruction;

(e) to discover, collect and preserve records having any bearing upon the history of New Brunswick;

(f) to copy and publish copies of records relating to the history of New Brunswick;

(g) to classify, index and catalogue all records in his custody; and

(h) to perform such other duties as prescribed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

8.19 Staff we spoke to seemed quite familiar with and committed to the mandate of PANB as documented in the *Archives Act*.

8.20 The mission statement of PANB, as documented in the 1999-2000 Department of Supply and Services annual report is as follows:

The Provincial Archives is responsible for identifying and preserving public and private sector records that are of legal, administrative and historical significance to New Brunswick. The Provincial Archives' mandate also includes the management of government records and information resources and the promotion of access to New Brunswick's documentary heritage.

8.21 This mission statement is consistent with the mandate of the organization, as documented in the *Archives Act*.

Scope of PANB operations

8.22 The Provincial Archives of New Brunswick are only one of a number of archives currently operating in the Province. Some of the larger ones are at the University of New Brunswick, l'Université de Moncton (Moncton and Edmundston campuses), Mount Allison University, and the New Brunswick Museum. There are also archives for Charlotte County, Albert County, Carleton County, Grand Manan, etc. Twenty-five of the archives in the Province are members of the Council of Archives New Brunswick, a co-operative organization of archival organizations within the Province that facilitates the sharing of knowledge and resources. All archives do at least some acquisition and appraisal of records. However, the smaller ones generally only have volunteer staff, and the level of interest among those volunteers varies over time.

8.23 From a review of the legislative debates at the time the *Archives Act* was passed, it does not appear that the *Archives Act* was intended to

give PANB the mandate to centralize all archival records in Fredericton. Rather, PANB was given a co-ordinating/overseeing role relating to archival records stored in the Province.

8.24 In practice, PANB's co-ordinating/overseeing role is being handled by a provincial co-ordinator, who is an employee of the Council of Archives New Brunswick. It is the responsibility of the provincial co-ordinator to ensure that the risk of important records held by other provincial archives becoming lost or inaccessible is minimized.

8.25 PANB staff assists the co-ordinator as necessary in carrying out her duties, and office space is provided at the Bonar Law building. Also, PANB is a major contributor to the funding of the Council of Archives New Brunswick. This arrangement seems to be in keeping with the intent of the Act. The provincial co-ordinator helps PANB meet their mandate by ensuring that assessment, preservation, and accessibility concerns at the other provincial archives are handled appropriately.

Resources provided to PANB

8.26 PANB appears to be under-resourced for what they are being called upon to do in the *Archives Act*. During our review, we noted that the resources provided to PANB have not increased in recent years, while the number of records they are being called upon to administer continues to grow substantially.

8.27 This under-resourcing seems to be a chronic problem for PANB. For example the need for a new repository, for which funding has been recently announced, was first identified in the early 1980s. Because funding has not been provided to date, PANB now has three separate storage locations, creating inefficiencies and preservation concerns in the operation. In another example, when the audio-visual section was set up a number of years ago, no new money was allocated in the budget. PANB was obliged to reallocate staff from other areas of the operation. This was required despite the fact that there was a legitimate need to set up this section because of the volume of public and private audio-visual records being acquired pursuant to PANB's legislated mandate. Staff also indicated that the materials budget has traditionally been, and continues to be, below what is required to meet the requirements of an archival operation of the size of PANB. Finally, no budget amounts are currently allocated for contracting out specialized work where such expertise does not exist in-house, such as the costly restoration and reformatting of film, and other visual records. As will be discussed later, this is resulting in the permanent loss of some of these records.

8.28 PANB has attempted to address resource shortfalls by securing special project funding from various sources, by using volunteers, by recycling old equipment no longer needed by other areas of government, and by constructing their own special purpose equipment where feasible.

8.29 However, despite these efforts, there are very large backlogs of records that have not been subject to archival selection procedures, or arranged and described in accordance with archival standards. Additionally, the Conservator has estimated that the backlog of conservation work would take approximately ten years to clear with current resources. There is also a substantial backlog of several thousand boxes of records to be microfilmed.

8.30 Because of the backlogs in archival work, PANB staff makes archival activity their priority. Thus, areas such as policy development, strategic planning, performance reporting, and other administrative activity are often not addressed. Resulting deficiencies in these areas are discussed later in this chapter.

8.31 Archival work is very labour intensive. Therefore, resource shortfalls translate into an understaffing situation. Temporary or volunteer workers are useful, but because of the learning curve involved with archival work they cannot be as effective as full-time staff.

8.32 There may also be some succession problems at PANB in the short term. Six members of a total staff of 32 members will retire by 31 March 2002 under the Voluntary Early Retirement Window (VERW) program. Those staff members include three archivists (including two section heads, one of which is the PANB Conservator), and three technicians. Those people will have to be replaced with appropriately qualified individuals. We are not aware of any formal succession planning having taken place to date to ensure that appropriately qualified replacements are found, or that knowledge is transferred from retiring staff.

8.33 A number of areas of the legislated mandate would seem to be negatively impacted by under-resourcing. As previously noted, PANB does not have the resources available to classify, index and catalogue all records in their custody as required by the *Archives Act*. They have not been very active in discovering records having a bearing upon the history of New Brunswick, or copying and publishing records relating to the history of New Brunswick. Also, until the new repository is available for use, they cannot fully protect public records against deterioration or loss. Some of these problems are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

8.34 In our opinion, PANB cannot fully meet its legislated mandate given the level of funding it currently receives from government. It appears that one of two options would be appropriate in the circumstances. Either funding to PANB should be increased to a level that would support achievement of their mandate, or the *Archives Act* should be adjusted to bring expectations in line with funding available for this operation.

Recommendations

8.35 We recommended that the resource requirements of PANB be reviewed as part of the upcoming strategic planning process for the organization. Representations should then be made to government as part of the next budget cycle requesting necessary increases in funding. As will be discussed later, the representations would be better supported if adequate performance reporting information were made available by PANB.

8.36 We further recommended that in the event adequate funding is not available from government, amendments to the *Archives Act* should be proposed that would bring the mandate of PANB more in line with what is achievable with the resources provided by government. The potential costs, in terms of lost information, of selecting this option should be carefully analyzed before action is taken.

8.37 We further recommended that PANB develop a formal succession plan to cover key staff who will be retiring under the VERW.

Policies and procedures

8.38 Policies and procedures seem to provide guidance in all key areas of PANB's operations. Organizational policies and procedures are consistent with the *Archives Act*, organizational objectives, and archival standards. However, policies and procedures, while complete, are not particularly well organized. There is no one document within PANB that captures all key policies of the organization and some policies and procedures are written in the form of discussion papers (e.g. appraisal of textual records). Additionally, there is no process in place to update policies and procedures on a regular basis to ensure that organizational policies and procedures are consistent with the *Archives Act*, the strategic plan, and current archival standards.

8.39 During our review of individual policies and procedures, we noted that the Conservation Policy and related Risk Management Checklist prepared in 1997 by the Conservator are still in draft form. Neither has been finalized or adopted yet, although the policy is used as a reference source by staff. The draft Conservation Policy includes some new requirements in the area of conservation of records. Furthermore, it appears that the Risk Management Checklist would be of assistance to PANB in identifying potential problems in physical security of records and other important areas before they became more serious. It should be noted that certain aspects of the Risk Management Checklist are already incorporated into current practices. PANB management does plan to finalize and adopt both documents in the near future, prior to the retirement of the current Conservator.

Recommendations

8.40 We recommended that the Conservation Policy and Risk Management Checklist as developed by the Conservator be finalized and adopted as soon as possible.

Records management policy

8.41 We recommended that PANB develop a regular review process to ensure that organizational policies and procedures are consistent with the *Archives Act*, the strategic plan, and current archival standards.

8.42 We recommended that a policies and procedures manual be developed for PANB that pulls together all organizational policies and procedures into one comprehensive document.

8.43 Section 5(1) of the *Archives Act* requires the Provincial Archivist ... to prepare records schedules governing the retention, destruction and transfer of public records to the Archives.

8.44 “Records schedule” is defined in the Act as a timetable that describes the lifespan of a record from the time of its creation through active and dormant stages to its final disposition either as waste or as a record of legal or historical value to be permanently preserved at PANB.

8.45 There has been a records management policy in the provincial administration manual since 1993. That policy generally documents the division of duties between PANB and the departments with regards to the management of public records. It gives PANB a policy-setting and overseeing role with regards to records management in government. It gives departments the responsibility for most hands-on records management activities up until the time that records are transferred to PANB or destroyed. For example, it delegates responsibility for preparing records schedules to the departments, although PANB must approve them.

8.46 PANB is also given responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the policy.

...The Provincial Archives will submit an annual report to the Public Records Committee assessing the current state of records management, and will make recommendations for the modification of this policy and the achievement of greater adherence. To facilitate implementation, the Provincial Archives will regularly conduct a review of each department, both to examine current issues and to assist in planning for program development over time.

8.47 To date, PANB work in this area has been limited to surveying departments and reporting back on the current state of records management in government.

8.48 While PANB has been assigned a policy-setting and overseer role, it has not been provided with many tools to ensure that departments comply with the records management policy. Consequently, there are some parts of the policy with which departments are not complying particularly well. For example, the records management policy requires

that departments “*establish and adequately staff the records management program...*” PANB noted that there have been problems created by the varying degrees of records management expertise and staff levels in key records management positions within the departments. A few departments have very skilled records management professionals in key positions, while others have clerical staff. This may put the public information resource at risk and make it difficult to implement records management policies and strategies consistently across government. PANB staff noted that the quality of departmental records management staff will take on even more importance in the future in light of the increased emphasis on electronic records management.

8.49 Because it cannot enforce the policy, PANB has taken a co-operative approach with departments to improve compliance. This has been done by promoting the benefits to departments of adhering to the policy, and the risks and costs to which they are exposed if they choose not to comply. They offer assistance to departmental staff in scheduling records and provide training courses in records management. They also refuse to accept departmental records for which a schedule has not been prepared. PANB’s efforts have been successful to the extent that approximately 75% of all government paper records are now scheduled. Therefore, 25% have not. Note that since departments are prohibited under the *Archives Act* from destroying records without the consent of PANB, unscheduled records must be stored within departments. We were told that departmental storage space is more costly than storage space provided by PANB. Consequently, unscheduled records may lead to increased costs for government.

8.50 Because of the lack of adequate resources, PANB has only been able to focus on one area of the records management policy at a time. PANB is currently heading up an initiative to develop a government electronic records strategy in co-operation with government departments. PANB staff indicated that over the next five years, ensuring that electronic records have been scheduled in accordance with the government records management policy will require a significant effort on the part of government departments and PANB. Failing to address this area now will result in the loss of significant electronic records in the future. To this point, very few of the electronic records being created by departments have been scheduled. The Department of Natural Resources and Energy was, however, mentioned as being very progressive in this area.

8.51 By choosing to concentrate on electronic records management, the organization will not have the resources to focus at the same time on other important areas of weakness. (Management of public audio-visual records by departments as discussed later in this chapter, ensuring that all public paper records are scheduled, etc.)

Recommendations

8.52 We recommended that PANB develop a permanent forum through which areas of non-compliance with the Records Management Policy can be highlighted and addressed.

8.53 We further recommended that PANB continue to play a central role in developing and implementing an electronic records management strategy for the Province of New Brunswick.

Assessment, arrangement, and description of records

8.54 A key decision point for the Provincial Archives is the assessment of groups of records to determine if they are of legal, administrative and/or historical significance to New Brunswick and therefore should be permanently archived. The term “assessment” includes the acquisition, appraisal, and selection of records. This area is well covered by the documented policies and procedures of PANB. However, staff did point out that not all decisions can be prescribed, and that professional judgement must be applied by staff as appropriate in the circumstances. In that respect, archivists are governed by the professional standards and a code of ethics set by the Association of Canadian Archivists. We did some testing in this area and found that decisions to permanently archive particular groups of records were based upon PANB policies and were in accordance with professional standards.

8.55 The acquisition of records follows separate paths for public and private records. PANB provides semi-active storage for all public (i.e. departmental) records at the Records Management Centre. Each group of records has an associated records retention and disposal schedule that indicates how long the records are to be held in interim storage, and what the final disposition of those records is to be at the end of the interim storage period (i.e. destroyed, archived, or selectively archived). For the most part, then, the flow of public records into the Provincial Archives is predictable.

8.56 The acquisition of private records is much more unpredictable. Typically, a lot of the private records acquired by PANB come through donations. They will occasionally purchase items of significance, but a very limited acquisition budget precludes this from happening often. PANB has not been particularly proactive in seeking out private records that would be of historical significance to the Province, although they do make inquiries about record holdings of interest when they become aware of them. The appraisal and acquisition of series of records are normally completed by a team of two PANB staff members. Where groups of records are not of interest to PANB, they often offer them to other archives to which they may be of interest. Staff noted that they have never turned down private records due to a lack of storage space.

8.57 Records, once acquired, are to be dealt with on a timely basis. The responsible section is to get control of material by making a preliminary assessment of condition, assigning temporary numbering, and entering basic information into a database/finding aid. All records are to be stored

in the best available conditions immediately upon receipt. Any records needing immediate conservation work are to be transferred to the conservation section.

8.58 From our review, we feel that, in general, appropriate practices are being followed for new acquisitions. There are no significant backlogs at this stage of the process in the public records and audio-visual sections. All records we tested were included in finding aids as appropriate. However, in the private records section, a significant number of records in the storage annex in the industrial park have not yet made it into finding aids, although staff indicated they are aware of their existence and can refer researchers to them if the need arises. PANB staff members feel that this backlog may create a negative public perception. When a donor gives material to the Archives, they expect that the public will be able to access the information. It negatively impacts upon the reputation of the Archives if a donor comes back after some time has passed and their donation is not in a finding aid.

8.59 New finding aids are now computerized for all types of records with the exception of cartographic records. This allows better accessibility for all records by providing searchable databases. Access to various sub-systems within PANB is restricted on an “as required” basis (i.e. write access only to staff working in that section), and all databases are password protected.

8.60 PANB uses the Rules for Archival Description (RAD) in arranging and describing all archival records. RAD are standards developed by the archival community in Canada. A large number of the archival records held by PANB have not been arranged and described in accordance with RAD. This is as a direct result of resource limitations. This work is very labour-intensive, and PANB simply does not have the staff to properly arrange and describe all its holdings. Consequently, PANB finding aids vary from very basic to advanced depending on PANB’s assessment of public/researcher interest in a particular series of records. Priority is given to records considered of most interest.

8.61 The more work put into arranging and describing an archival record by PANB, the more likely a researcher is to find it when researching a particular area. Thus arranging and describing series of archival records in accordance with RAD is a value added service to users of the Provincial Archives and can greatly improve the accessibility of PANB holdings. It also reduces the time that researchers are required to spend in their research by eliminating the need to look through a lot of irrelevant documents.

8.62 During our work, we noted that while staff acknowledged there are substantial backlogs in the arrangement and description of archival records, there was no formal tracking of these backlogs. Such information would be of use in managing the operation by providing trending data that

would help identify problem areas. It would also provide objective support for requests for additional resources, and be a source of performance reporting data.

Recommendation

8.63 We recommended that a tracking system be developed to capture data relating to the acquisition, appraisal, selection, arrangement, and description of records. This data can be used for management and performance reporting purposes, as well as to support organizational strategies, requests for additional resources, etc.

8.64 We also recommended that a plan be developed to clear the backlog of private records that do not currently appear in a finding aid.

8.65 We further recommended that the finding aids for cartographic records be computerized to improve accessibility to them.

Storage conditions

8.66 The Bonar Law building on the University of New Brunswick campus was initially assigned to PANB when it was set up in the late 1960s. That building still serves as the public access location for PANB, and also provides storage space for about twenty percent of the archival holdings of PANB. The other eighty percent of holdings are stored in two separate locations in the Fredericton Industrial Park. Since archival records are, by definition, held in perpetuity, the requirement for storage space will continue to grow over time.

8.67 PANB also provides a large amount of storage space for semi-active records of government departments in one of the Industrial Park facilities. The requirements for semi-active storage continue to grow, along with associated costs. Departments, in consultation with PANB staff, decide how long records are to be held in semi-active storage. Only five percent of records in semi-active storage eventually end up as archival records. Thus, to control storage costs, it is important that departments schedule records to be retained in semi-active storage only as long as necessary.

8.68 Environmental storage standards for records, except film, are similar. The PANB Conservator indicated that they include a constant temperature of 18°C and relative humidity of 35%, along with storage consisting of adequate archival shelving, cabinets and storage boxes. These storage standards were developed over time by PANB and were based upon standards followed by the National Archives of Canada and the Library of Congress in the USA. For film, cold (i.e. 2°C), dry conditions are necessary. The storage standards described in this paragraph are widely accepted in the archival community.

8.69 There are a number of deficiencies in the current storage areas used by PANB. Staff recognize these deficiencies but, to date, have not had sufficient resources available to address them. Some major problem areas include the following:

- Using multiple locations to store archival records leads to the need to transfer records between locations on a regular basis. This introduces the risk of records being damaged or lost in transit, and sometimes delays access to records by researchers. Also, the cost to bring storage conditions up to archival standards would be higher with multiple location storage. Administratively, maintaining three separate storage locations also adds to cost in terms of time for staff to travel between locations. We would note, however, that the system for transferring records between storage locations appears to be functioning well at present.
- Staff monitors the storage conditions in all three facilities on an ongoing basis. However, there are a limited number of changes they can make at present if they detect a problem. There is temperature control equipment in only the Bonar Law building. There is no pollution monitoring system in any of the buildings. The Bonar Law building is the only storage facility at which humidity can be controlled to some extent, and we were told that the HVAC system in that building is starting to wear out. Additionally, there is some concern about the inability of PANB to maintain stable storage conditions throughout the year, particularly during the summer months. In fact, because of excess humidity, there was a major mould outbreak in the storage vault at the Bonar Law building during the summer of 1998 that led to the loss of parts of some records. Mould is an ongoing issue as spores are constantly being introduced when new records are moved into the vault. In the case of the 1998 outbreak, the HVAC system was unable to reduce the humidity level to acceptable limits. Through the efforts of the management and staff of PANB, with assistance from some staff from the Research and Productivity Council, the outbreak was brought under control. A technical cleaner hired on contract to help address that problem is still working at PANB to ensure that the problem does not recur. PANB staff has indicated that it would be appropriate to have a fulltime person doing that job to reduce the risk of recurrence of this sort of problem.
- There is no cold room for storing film records. Archival film records show moving images of previous eras in New Brunswick, including places, people and activities. In many ways, they are the most revealing records held by PANB. Cold, dry storage, as describe above, effectively halts the deterioration of film that takes place at room temperature. The lack of a cold storage room at PANB is resulting in permanent losses of archival films over time. Most of the films held by PANB have not been restored or reformatted as yet because of limited resources and the high cost of doing this work. Also, in many circumstances, because of their poor condition, they cannot be copied.

Therefore, it is the original films that are being lost. We understand that PANB has been donated a cold storage room by the National Archives of Canada, but does not yet have a location in which to set it up.

- There are a number of serious storage deficiencies in the cartographic and architectural records section. Holdings include maps in a variety of scales showing various areas of the Province, along with architectural drawings of buildings of interest in the Province. These records are of professional interest to surveyors, lawyers, architects, and others. The records in the section have outgrown the area in which they are intended to be stored. Some records have been moved to one of the Industrial Park storage locations, but the primary storage area remains overcrowded. The section does not have enough specialized enclosed cabinets to accommodate all cartographic and architectural records held. Consequently, many of the cartographic and architectural records are stored on open shelving units and are not protected in any way from the effects of the sprinkler system, should it be triggered. Also, many of the records are stored rolled up in tubes rather than flat as specified in archival standards. Further, shelving units are stacked higher than they are supposed to be, making it more difficult to remove records for viewing, and thereby increasing the risk of handling damage. Archival standards specify a maximum five-foot height for cabinets to facilitate safe handling of these records. Many file cabinets containing stacked documents are also over-filled, resulting in a risk of damage to the documents on top when drawers are opened. Finally, a report we reviewed indicated that the load-bearing capacity of the floor in the cartographic/architectural storage area may be exceeded.

8.70 There are no water infiltration detection systems at any of the storage facilities currently in use. This is particularly of concern at the Bonar Law building. The flat roof on that facility has a tendency to leak, and there has been at least one small leak in the vault area recently. In that case, minimal damage resulted to archival records, but the risk of more significant damage does exist.

8.71 Storing archival records in substandard conditions does have a cost. The PANB Conservator has estimated that stabilization costs for records in substandard storage is approximately \$1.1 million per annum. This is not an out-of-pocket cost to PANB, but rather an estimate of how much extra is being added each year to the total expenditure that would be required to bring the entire PANB collection up to standard. In other words PANB is saying that for each year that existing storage deficiencies are not addressed, it gets \$1.1 million further away from fully complying with archival standards and the risk increases that archival records will be permanently lost.

Recommendations

8.72 We recommended that the Department of Supply and Services proceed with the design and construction of the new repository for PANB as discussed in the next section. This will address the issues raised above as long as the repository is appropriately designed to address current storage deficiencies.

8.73 We also offered the following specific recommendations to address the issues raised in this section.

8.74 We recommended that the planned repository be designed to be big enough to accommodate all existing archival holdings of PANB and provide room for expansion of the holdings for a reasonable period of time into the future.

8.75 We recommended that the design include the ability to monitor temperature, humidity and pollution levels and adjust them to meet archival storage requirements.

8.76 We recommended that the design include water detection systems to alert PANB to water intrusion, especially during those hours when storage facilities are unattended.

8.77 We recommended that proper storage facilities (i.e. shelving units and cabinets) and containers be provided for each type of archival media (e.g. cartographic records should be flattened and stored in appropriate cabinets to reduce damage due to handling).

8.78 We recommended that the donated cold storage facility be incorporated into the design of the new repository to allow for proper storage of the PANB film collection.

Planned new repository

8.79 The government has approved funding for the design and construction of a repository during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 fiscal years. It is projected that the planned repository will meet the archival storage needs of PANB for the next fifteen years and will allow all archival records to be stored in one location. If properly designed, it will also address other storage concerns by including a cold room, a more stable and controllable storage environment, variable type shelving that allows records that need to be stored horizontally or vertically as required, and proper size archival storage cabinets and boxes. We would also note that based upon an analysis prepared by PANB, the planned high-density storage method represents the most economical method of storing archival records.

8.80 PANB will face a significant challenge with regard to the transfer of records when the new repository has been completed. A logistical plan will be needed to ensure that archival records are transferred into the new repository safely and efficiently. Because of their awkward size, cartographic and architectural records will be particularly problematic.

There will also be the logistical problems associated with transferring some 80% of PANB archival holdings from other storage locations. Among the decisions to be made in advance are shelf configuration, box sizes, how a new bar code system will be implemented, how to update location information within existing finding aids, and how to minimize disruption to ongoing PANB operations during the move. (The intention of PANB is to keep the archives open to the public during the period of the move.)

8.81 Once the move into the new repository has been completed, the current storage area in the Bonar Law building will be available for other purposes. There are no documented plans yet for how that space will be used. However, we did note that the existing public access area does not include wheelchair accessible washroom facilities.

Recommendations

8.82 We recommended that a logistical plan be developed in advance of the completion of the repository to ensure that archival records are transferred into the new repository safely and efficiently, and without unduly disrupting the ongoing operations of PANB.

8.83 We also recommended that the lack of wheelchair accessible washrooms at the Bonar Law building be addressed at the earliest possible date.

Conservation

8.84 PANB has a conservation section that is responsible for dealing with all aspects of record conservation including anything that impacts upon the condition of records under the control of the organization. The section examines records that may need conservation work, and assesses the seriousness of the problem and thus how quickly conservation activity must take place. Also, in accordance with archival standards, all conservation work performed on particular records is documented.

8.85 The section is run by the PANB Conservator who has had a very positive impact on the ability of PANB to preserve archival records. We were told by an independent third party from outside the Province that, "The PANB conservation program is vital to the institution but very under-funded. The Conservator is ... nationally recognized as a very innovative conservator, who has developed an excellent program on a shoe string." He has also assisted other archival organizations, both inside and outside the Province.

8.86 At present, due to resource limitations, the Conservator has no staff. Occasionally, he is able to assign work to contract staff, students, or volunteers, but not on any sort of continuous basis. We were also told that lacking an equipment budget, he often constructs his own conservation equipment. Not surprisingly given the resource limitations, the Conservator indicated that there is currently a ten-year backlog in conservation work that needs to be completed, and that it is growing.

Failing to complete necessary conservation work on a timely basis will result in the permanent loss of archival records.

8.87 The current Conservator will be retiring in 2002 under the Voluntary Early Retirement Window. As he is the only full-time staff member in the conservation section, PANB runs the risk of losing a great deal of valuable knowledge unless a successor is appointed in advance of the Conservator's retirement to allow for training and a transfer of knowledge. We would also note that the planning for the new repository should ideally be done before he leaves as his expertise will be valuable in ensuring that existing deficiencies in the storage of archival records are rectified in the new facility.

Recommendation

8.88 We recommended that the Conservator's replacement be appointed prior to the retirement of the current Conservator to allow adequate time for training and transfer of knowledge.

Audio-visual storage media

8.89 The area of audio-visual storage media is a problem for all archives that deal with these types of records, and PANB is no exception. Audio-visual records include such records as early filmed images of New Brunswick, video recordings of important New Brunswick events and citizens, audio recordings of provincial hearings, recordings of court depositions, music by New Brunswick artists, etc. These records create a lot of difficulty because of the wide variety of technologies that have been introduced and discontinued over the past 75 years. Some records that are received by archives are simply not accessible and others are only retrievable after a lot of staff work and/or the use of specialized equipment. Archival practice is to reformat such records where possible to a more permanent medium for long term retention. However, this can be a very costly process.

8.90 PANB has attempted to keep up with technological advances. A document entitled, "Audio-Visual Records - Procedures for Acquisition, Preservation and Access" has been prepared in draft form by PANB. There are also references to standards for reformatting from obsolete media and choice of media in the Conservation Procedures draft. PANB has also had some involvement with work being done in this area on a co-operative national basis.

8.91 Because of limited resources, PANB cannot fully address the reformatting needs of their audio-visual holdings. They are able to do most reformatting of audio records in house and have, on occasion, employed innovative techniques to recover audio records. However, reformatting of video, and especially film, often requires that the work be sub-contracted privately, a very expensive undertaking. Occasionally a PANB user will be willing to pay for reformatting in order to get access to certain records. General researcher interest drives any additional reformatting work that is done. However, in general, the audio-visual section concentrates on stabilizing the condition of film and video and

does very little reformatting of those records. And, as previously discussed, the lack of a cold room at PANB means that film records cannot be fully stabilized given current facilities. Therefore, over time, more and more of these records are becoming inaccessible and consequently permanently lost.

8.92 PANB staff indicated that there is a significant problem with departmental records management practices relating to audio-visual records. This area is covered in general by the Records Management Policy. However, at present there is no government-wide strategy for audio-visual records, nor are there specific standards governing the quality and format of recording for audio or visual records created by government departments or related conservation concerns. The lack of guidance with regards to the management of audio-visual records has, in general, led departments to take the following actions:

- Using the cheapest media available (i.e. budget cassettes and VHS format VCR tapes) regardless of the expected retention period of the record. The two media noted have an expected life of less than ten years, whereas a department may need access to the information contained on a recording for twenty-five or more years. There are better options, but they would cost departments more.
- Using ninety-minute cassettes when sixty-minute cassettes are the standard for archival storage. Ninety-minute cassettes give inferior recording quality and are more subject to breakage.
- Providing sketchy descriptions for audio-visual material, making it hard to determine what recordings contain without playing them back, a very time-consuming process.
- Not scheduling records, or providing schedules without technical data about tape recording speed, etc.
- Recording at low speed (thereby maximizing the information that can be recorded on a tape) and using both sides of tapes for recording. Both actions negatively effect the quality and durability of a recording.
- Maintaining only one copy of each recording. This is especially problematic in cases where transcriptions are typed from original recordings because of the requirement to start and stop playback constantly. This puts stress on tape mechanisms, risking breakage.
- Improperly maintaining departmental playback equipment or using inferior quality equipment. This is one of the most common causes of damage to recordings.

8.93 Taken together, these actions have two major consequences. First, they can lead to damage or loss of recordings during the period in which a department may need to access them (i.e. the semi-active storage period), subjecting the Province to various risks. For example, the Department of Justice often refers to recordings in court cases, sometimes many years

after they were recorded. Loss of these recordings may subject the Province to various legal or other risks. Second, use of non-archival media for recordings and lack of information on the form and content of those recordings will increase the cost to PANB to fulfil their mandate. Lack of information results in more time being needed by PANB to determine if a record should be selected for permanent retention. But more importantly, recordings on non-archival media must be reformatted by PANB. This is very costly in terms of PANB staff time and/or contracting out to do necessary work. PANB staff indicated that the savings obtained by departments in choosing the cheapest audio-visual options are small in comparison with the increased costs incurred by PANB.

Recommendation

8.94 We recommended that PANB play a central role in developing and implementing an audio-visual records management strategy for the Province of New Brunswick, as seems to be their role under the Records Management Policy discussed previously in this chapter. As part of that strategy, guidelines should be developed that will be applied by departments in managing their audio-visual records.

Physical threats and security of facilities

8.95 There is a Disaster Response Plan for PANB that was prepared in 1998 and is in effect. Also, as previously noted, a Risk Management Checklist has been drafted but not finalized and adopted. The checklist covers the risks mentioned in this section among others. Use of the checklist would provide a structured way to evaluate risk on a periodic basis and identify problems before they become more serious.

8.96 There is no insurance on collections held by PANB, in keeping with the Province's policy of self-insurance of assets. PANB management noted that in the area of archives, most items are irreplaceable. Therefore, insurance would only be necessary to cover costs to restore damaged items. In the past, such costs have been borne by the Province as needed (e.g. the cost of restoring the records damaged in the 1973 flood in downtown Fredericton was covered by the Province).

8.97 Generally, the risk of fire is well managed at PANB. Buildings have sprinkler systems in storage areas and fire alarms throughout that are linked to the fire department. We did note that the Bonar Law building has not been inspected by the provincial fire marshal in recent years. It has, however, been subject to a risk management study by the Department of Supply and Services. This study led to the construction of additional fire exits, a project that was ongoing during our work. The study also suggested that records be moved further away from sprinklers to ensure their effectiveness, although that has not been possible in all cases due to space limitations. Daily closing procedures also address some areas of fire risk, particularly for the older Bonar Law building where the risk of fire would seem to be higher. Given the age of that building, we feel that it should be inspected by the provincial fire marshal on a regular basis.

8.98 There is no security alarm system at any of the storage facilities. However, the Bonar Law building is patrolled several times each night (inside and outside) by UNB Campus Security. Private security services also patrol the outside of industrial park locations during off-hours. To a certain extent, the sheer volume of records held by PANB in the various locations serves as a disincentive to anyone attempting to misappropriate something of value. It would be difficult and time consuming for an unauthorized entrant to locate anything worth stealing.

8.99 Responsibility for the daytime security of each facility has been assigned. For the two staffed facilities, opening and closing procedures are followed on a daily basis that include inspection of physical plant for problems, and a complete walkthrough of the buildings to ensure that there are no unauthorized personnel present at closing time and that nothing else unusual is observed.

8.100 In general, researchers may only conduct research at the Bonar Law building, although they may arrange to visit the staffed industrial park location by setting up an appointment in advance. They are further restricted to public areas within the Bonar Law building unless accompanied by a PANB staff member. On rare occasions researchers are allowed into the vault area of the Bonar Law building. In those cases, they are closely supervised by PANB staff. During our work at the Bonar Law building, we noted that the building entrance was always attended by PANB staff. Staff at the front desk ensure that researchers and other visitors keep to public areas or are accompanied by a PANB staff member.

8.101 Staff members have access to all areas of the PANB facilities, although they are primarily expected to be in areas of relevance to their own work. There is, however, a restricted area in the vault to which only a selected number of people have access. It is normally locked and contains records to which access is restricted by Legislation. Restricted records include adoption information, public records containing personal information about anyone born within the last one hundred years, and records disclosing opinions or recommendations made by a Minister or the Executive Council during the last twenty years.

8.102 There is currently a risk at PANB that original records will be mishandled or misappropriated by researchers. The following factors contribute to this risk:

- Two PANB staff members are assigned to assist and supervise the public access area of the Bonar Law building, that includes the entry area and research room, at any one time. With this level of staffing, it is impossible to maintain a constant staff presence in the research room during open hours. We were told that resource limitations currently preclude PANB from increasing the number of staff assigned to assist and supervise researchers.

- Researchers are to initial a slip before original records are provided to them. In our opinion, this does not provide much in the way of control over records, particularly when a researcher is not known to staff.
- There are no bag searches or other procedures in effect designed to prevent misappropriation of records by researchers leaving the Bonar Law building.

8.103 These weaknesses are somewhat mitigated by the following factors:

- Researchers primarily use microfilm copies of records prepared by PANB staff, and not original records.
- Staff we talked to indicated that, in general, they feel that the loss of records is quite rare at PANB. They also noted that losses of which they are aware were as a result of misfiling, not theft.

8.104 We recognize that regardless of what procedures are adopted, there will continue to be a risk of mishandling and misappropriation of original records by researchers at PANB. However, we feel that this risk could be better managed by ensuring the constant presence of a PANB staff member in the research room.

Recommendations

8.105 We recommended that a PANB staff member be constantly present in the research room at the Bonar Law building during open hours.

8.106 We recommended that PANB ensure that its facilities are inspected by the provincial fire marshal on a regular basis.

Performance reporting by PANB

8.107 Performance reporting is an important facet of modern public accountability. During the last few years, the Province has taken steps to introduce performance reporting in the public sector in New Brunswick.

8.108 There is a particular process that needs to be followed to ensure that there is effective reporting of performance. It is made up of four sequential steps as follows:

- Develop a mission statement and strategic objectives for the organization. The mission statement will explain the reason for the existence of the organization. The strategic objectives will identify, in clear, measurable terms, what is required to satisfy that mission.
- Identify one or more performance indicators for each strategic objective identified for the organization. These performance indicators will identify how success in achieving each strategic objective is to be evaluated.
- Set targets for organizational performance indicators. These targets should be the levels of performance at which the related strategic objective can be considered to have been achieved for the period covered by the target. Targets should normally be set annually.

- Capture and report on actual achievement against target by performance indicator. We agree with the provincial annual report policy that indicates that the most appropriate means of conveying performance reporting information is through the organizational annual report. Such information should allow the reader of the annual report to determine, in as objective a way as possible, the extent to which an organization has achieved its strategic objectives and its mission. Additionally, explanations should be provided where planned performance has not been achieved, and actions to be taken to improve performance should be documented.

8.109 Inherent in the process of setting performance targets, and then reporting achievements against those targets, is that targets will sometimes not be met. In performance reporting, this should not automatically be considered as “failure.” An important part of performance reporting is considering explanations of why targets were or were not reached. Equally important is the identification as to what will be done differently in the following year as a result of experience gained. It is crucial to the success of performance reporting that all parties recognize this and use performance reporting information primarily as a method of improving the organization and drawing attention to external limitations, and not simply as a source of information in assessing individual or workgroup performance.

Strategic planning at PANB

8.110 The current PANB strategic plan was drafted in 1993 and has not been updated since then. PANB management indicated the strategic plan will be updated during the 2001-2002 fiscal year.

8.111 The 1993 PANB strategic plan identifies ten “critical success factors” that seem to approximate strategic objectives for PANB. They are as follows:

1. Preservation and availability of public and private records of legal, administrative and historical significance.
2. Adequate foundation in policies, standards and statutes for programs.
3. Support provided for other Archives.
4. Mandate clearly defined and understood by staff, clients, government resource allocators.
5. Aware of and meet clients’ needs.
6. Services provided professionally through professional development, currency of knowledge and techniques, responsiveness.
7. Staff work as a team.
8. Partnerships developed with clients, other service providers.
9. Archives promoted through support group, exhibits, education programs.
10. Records and information resources efficiently and effectively managed in all departments, agencies, municipalities, and the Courts.

8.112 These seem to give adequate coverage to all aspects of PANB operations. However, they may be a little too general to serve as a basis for

identifying performance indicators for PANB. We feel it would be appropriate to generate more measurable strategic objectives during the upcoming strategic planning exercise.

8.113 The 1993 strategic plan also included an action plan that covered the period from 1993-94 to 1997-98. PANB staff indicated some issues raised in the document have been addressed but most have not as yet, mainly due to resource limitations as previously discussed. The new repository, assuming it is appropriately designed and constructed, when operational will address most of the concerns raised with regards to the quality and quantity of storage space available. We feel it would be appropriate for PANB to update the action plan as part of the upcoming strategic planning exercise.

Performance reporting information

8.114 PANB provides information on its annual operations through the Department of Supply and Services' annual report. A review of the 1999-2000 Department of Supply and Services' annual report would lead the reader to believe that PANB does not face many issues. There is no mention of resource shortfalls, lack of compliance with the records management policy of government, issues with electronic and audio-visual records, backlogs of records to be processed, or other problem areas. Performance reporting in the 1999-2000 annual report covers user satisfaction with services provided by PANB, noting that surveyed users were quite satisfied. This is a good start, but does not address performance in the areas of acquisition, appraisal, selection, description, or conservation, all mission-critical areas. We feel that it would be appropriate to expand performance reporting to cover those areas, linking performance indicators to strategic objectives identified during the strategic planning process.

8.115 By enhancing existing reporting on performance, PANB could highlight their achievements and identify areas where major challenges are faced in achieving the organizational mission. This information could also be used to assist the organization in making a case for additional resources and in justifying its own strategic directions.

8.116 In order to provide more broad-based performance reporting, PANB would need to capture better data on activities within the organization than it does at present. For example, we feel that PANB needs to capture more information on the magnitude of backlogs of records at major stages of processing. Acceptable backlog levels should be set and actual levels tracked. When backlogs are excessive, action can be taken. Such action might include the temporary reallocation of staff, requests for additional resources, etc.

Recommendations

8.117 We recommended that the strategic plan as drafted in 1993 be updated as planned during the 2001-2002 fiscal year. That update should include developing measurable strategic objectives for PANB and updating the organizational action plan.

8.118 We further recommended that performance indicators be developed for each organizational strategic objective, that targets be set for each performance indicator, and that actual achievement be reported against those targets in the Department of Supply and Services' annual report. This may require capturing additional data relating to the day-to-day operations of PANB.

Departmental response

8.119 The Department of Supply and Services provided the following response to our report:

We have received and reviewed the audit report of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

As you know, action is underway in response to the principal challenge that the Archives has faced for some years and that you have noted, the facilities to ensure preservation of historical records. The new repository slated for completion in 2002 is expected to provide storage for all records currently held and for 15 years growth. The facility will meet exacting standards for environment, fire suppression, and storage and will be customized, as required, to meet the needs of various record formats.

Equally critical is another challenge you have identified, that of the management and preservation of electronic records. We are aware that prompt attention to this issue is required to ensure government's ability to function and be accountable, and ensure the survival of the historical record. I am pleased to say that the Archives has completed a strategic framework document outlining actions needed in this area and staff are working on an implementation plan. Clearly we will need additional resources, as you note, and the cooperation of all departments to meet this challenge.

The issues you have raised with respect to strategies, policies and procedures, and performance will be addressed.

We have noted your positive comments and your appreciation of the Archives' success in carrying out its mandate in view of resource limitations. We will continue to make a case for additional resources required to carry out the mandate of the Provincial Archives and the Archives' programs.

We will review all your recommendations as we plan for the Archives' future development and will follow-up accordingly.