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Archives Association of Ontario Awards – 2020

The AAO Awards Committee – consisting of Jean Dryden, Matt Szybalski, David Sharron, and Rodney Carter – were pleased and honoured to announce the winners of the 2020 AAO Awards at the AAO's AGM held on June 25th, 2020.

JAMES J. TALMAN AWARD – ANNA ST. ONGE

The James J. Talman Award was named after the second Archivist of Ontario, who served from 1935 to 1939. He subsequently served as Chief Librarian for the University of Western Ontario until 1969. The Award is given to individuals who have demonstrated an outstanding level of imagination and innovation in contributing to the profession, their institution, or the archival community, or who have challenged conventional thinking about archival work.

This year, our first Talman Award is presented to Anna St. Onge.

Anna is the Director of Digital Scholarship Infrastructure at York University Libraries. Prior to taking on this role, she was the Digital Projects and Outreach Archivist at York's Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections.

As Director of Digital Scholarship Infrastructure, she is establishing the infrastructure that supports digital scholarship, including collaboration, access, data curation and long-term preservation solutions, digital pedagogy, rights management, and research dissemination. In this capacity, she is leveraging her considerable archival experience to develop strategies, policies and processes around the management and use of digital records, and by extension is raising awareness of what archivists have to offer beyond the strict confines of the archives.



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According to her nominators, Anna’s work has shown how integral the archives are to the digital work that is ubiquitous in libraries and that notions of discovery, dissemination and preservation need to be considered using an archival lens. Anna’s influence is true to her characteristic grassroots nature, where she has tirelessly participated in meetings to ensure that archival viewpoints are heard and integrated into functional requirements. Her work in this capacity is described as “transformative” and that her being “at the leading edge of organizational change within the libraries [has been] truly innovative as [she] challenges conventional thinking about archival work and she has made archival practice inseparable from digital librarianship at York University Libraries.”

In her work at York University and beyond it, Anna is, as her nominators write, “generous with her time and knowledge, and imaginative and collaborative in her approach. Anna has become a visionary and a champion of what the potential of archives can be for future generations...” Further, they write that she “has repeatedly used her position and voice within the profession to push important questions forward. She has provided achievable ways of weaving values rooted in equity, inclusion, reconciliation and the upholding of human rights into the evolution of our practice.”

While her nominators note that Anna would be the first to state she does not do her work alone, her work is exemplified by courage, commitment, integrity, generosity, and leadership. She never hesitates to step up to take on difficult work, to speak out when required, and never fails to support and uplift those she works alongside, without seeking recognition for doing so.



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For her innovative work in bringing archival theories and methodologies to digital scholarship and for her continuing efforts to put challenging ideas and beliefs into action, we are thrilled to present Anna St. Onge with the James J. Talman Award.

TALMAN AWARD – PAULETTE DOZOIS

The second Talman Award for 2020 is being awarded to Paulette Dozois.

Paulette is currently Senior Lead Archivist/Block Review Team Leader in the Public Services Branch of Library and Archives Canada. She will be retiring this year, after forty-three years at LAC, during which time she has brought new ideas and approaches to her own work and that of her institution.

Throughout her career, Paulette has championed researchers' rights and sought to make the federal public records held by LAC open and available. Exemplifying her innovative approach to access has been Paulette's key role in the development and implementation of Block Review at LAC.

Block Review is the systematic review of blocks or series of archived government records which incorporates a risk-based approach that looks at both the age of the record and the subject. It is completed by using various sampling strategies to determine whether the records can be opened for public access under both the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. The process involves identifying and examining representative parts of the archival record and opening the records based on the findings of the examination.

The methodology was first developed in the early 2000s but despite early promise being shown, the programme soon faltered. In 2010, Paulette was chosen to revive



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Block Review, renewing and enhancing its methodology, and she was responsible for cultivating the political will within LAC to ensure its success. Despite being redeveloped during a tumultuous time at LAC, under Paulette's leadership, the project was able to garner early important successes and she was able to strategically exploit these successes to ensure Block Review became a permanent feature of LAC's accessibility regime.

Using sampling techniques to review large swaths of archival records, Paulette has been successful in adapting and improving traditional archival principles in the review of archival records to proactively open records in a fast and efficient manner, even before researchers have a chance to ask for access. To date, Paulette and her team have been able to open in excess of fifty million previously closed and restricted federal government documents, opening more than 10 times the number of records opened in a traditional manner.

Paulette has made presentations and given workshops on the new method across Canada and internationally and this methodology is now being considered for adoption by a number of provincial and even international archives.

Paulette's nominators recount a CBC News interview from December 2015 where LAC archivists were asked about their most unusual finds among the papers of ex-Prime Ministers and Paulette recounted how, while working with the Mackenzie King Papers, she found one of his molars among the files. "I wore white gloves," she said. The nominator continued, stating "Paulette Dozois has worked more than forty years in the archives field. She has worn white gloves when appropriate, but more often, she has had the gloves off as she fought to preserve Canada's historical records, to tell the world about them, and to get them into the hands of researchers."



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In recognition of her long career working to provide access to Federal records, culminating in her innovative work in developing Block Review, the AAO is delighted to present Paulette Dozois with the James J. Talman Award.

CORPORATE AWARD – PORTSTORONTO

The AAO Corporate Award is given to organizations, corporations, or agencies of any kind that have been particularly supportive of archives and/or the archival community. Nominees may include: organizations that have provided significant support to the promotion of education, publication, and/or other professional activities; organizations that have provided significant support to the activities of a particular institution; and organizations that have demonstrated imagination or creativity in the use of archives.

The AAO is pleased to present the 2020 Corporate Award to PortsToronto.

PortsToronto, formerly known as the Toronto Ports Authority and, prior to that, the Toronto Harbour Commission, is the agency that is responsible for the management of city's harbour and waterfront, including Terminals 51 and 52 of the Port of Toronto, the Outer Harbour Marina, and the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. The archives of PortsToronto was founded in 1975 and contains records dating back to the creation of the Toronto's Harbour Trust in 1850 and the archives documents the management and evolution of the city's waterfront from that time to the present. With the passing of the 1999 Canada Marine Act, the Toronto Harbour Commission became the Toronto Port Authority and the records fell under federal jurisdiction. While the records could have been transferred to Library and Archives Canada, it was determined they should remain in Toronto as they still had a great deal of administrative, legal, and historical value for the Authority and for researchers in



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the city. The archives are used to determine rights and responsibilities with developers, to assist with contaminated soil remediation and for other environmental purposes, and for promotional purposes, historical research, and use in exhibitions.

In 2017, following the rebranding of the agency to become PortsToronto in 2015, the agency's building – and the archives' home - at 60 Harbour St was sold.

PortsToronto moved into the Queen's Quay Terminal building but a new location was needed for the archives. PortsToronto undertook a major renovation of storage rooms at Terminal 52, creating a modern archival storage space, complete with HVAC system, fire-suppression and security systems, and additional shelving. Archival reference is provided out of the Queen's Quay Terminal offices.

In the words of the nominator, "Over the course of 45 years, the Toronto Harbour Commission and PortsToronto have been keepers of a documentary legacy that began in the mid-19th century. It has used its archives in innovative ways that offer corporate and public benefits. The costs of preservation and access could have been avoided by transferring these holdings to Ottawa. Instead, PortsToronto has ensured that these significant records remain in the region in which they were created and are accessible to promote an understanding of the historical context that shapes contemporary challenges facing Toronto's waterfront."

For its long track record of stewardship and its recent investment in the storage of its archives, the AAO is pleased to present PortsToronto its Corporate Award for 2020.