

Public Statement jointly issued by Association des archivistes du Québec, Association of Canadian Archivists, and Canadian Council of Archives concerning the Library and Archives Canada Code of Conduct: Values and Ethics.

As organizations representing archivists and archival institutions across Canada, we are compelled to express grave concern for recent limitations imposed on employees of Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Public servants who are the stewards of the archival records of the Government of Canada and the keepers of Canada's collective memory are now subject to a new "Code of Conduct: Values and Ethics" with restrictions that extend well beyond the workplace to personal activities and professional community engagement. Strict enforcement of this code would veer dangerously close to diminishing their rights as citizens of this democratic country.

Although we fully endorse a code of conduct for public servants and a clear articulation of values and ethics, we believe, however, that the Library and Archives Canada document goes too far. In particular, Section 4.4.2 of the Code identifies activities like teaching, speaking at conferences, and other personal engagements as "high risk" to LAC and to the employee with regard to conflict of interest, conflict of duty, and duty of loyalty. While acknowledging the need for a balance of "duty of loyalty with freedom of expression", the document offers certain conditions under which public servants may speak out. But the extreme conditions put forward only serve to expose the fear of any public criticism that might emerge when archivists engage in those activities deemed "high risk", such as teaching and conference participation.

LAC archivists and librarians have enriched the information professions in Canada and abroad. We fear, however, that provision 4.4.2 will preclude LAC employees from engaging with their professional colleagues, and will deny our professional and research communities access to the experience and knowledge that LAC staff have shared so effectively in the past. Indeed, responsible stewardship of the documentary heritage of this country requires ongoing collaboration and engagement--particularly as our practice evolves to tackle the new preservation challenges of digital information. More than ever, archivists in all our public institutions must work cooperatively, with conviction and dedication.

The preamble of the Library and Archives of Canada Act states LAC's mandate is to facilitate in Canada cooperation among the communities involved in the acquisition, preservation and diffusion of knowledge. We are concerned that section 4.4.2 of the Library and Archives Canada Code of Conduct could abrogate this mandated responsibility.

We encourage management of Library and Archives of Canada to revisit the wording and intent of this Code of conduct.