

A New Beginning: Collaborative Partnerships for Digitizing and Indexing Military Records of the Directorate of History and Heritage Archives

Warren Sinclair, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

This paper looks at the collaborative efforts by the Department of National Defence's (DND) Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) Archives to provide online access to its military records. Partnerships will be discussed with: the Archives Association of Ontario and its online archival network Archeion regarding fonds level descriptions; university military history programs regarding finding aids, guides, card catalogues and other research tools; Ancestry.ca regarding military records of genealogical interest to family history researchers; Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the Canadian Naval Technical History Association (CNTHA) regarding oral interviews with Naval Engineers and industry officials on naval construction and repair programs in Canada; and the Royal 22nd Regiment Museum and the digitization of a complete fonds. With these present and future actions and initiatives, the DHH Archives will be able to make available a maximum number of its archives.

Introduction

The principal goals of the DHH Archives are to make available a maximum number of its archives and to make the DHH website an essential tool for Canadian researchers in military history. However, a number of obstacles have stood in the way to achieving these goals. First, administrative problems have not allowed putting any archival databases and material on its website. Other directorates within DND with much larger databases and projects have a higher priority, especially in times of budgetary restraint. Second, all material that is to be on any DND website must be in both official languages, English and French. Again, other projects in DHH, particularly the writing of official histories, have a higher priority. Third, budgetary reductions have resulted in the complete stoppage of the scanning and digitizing of any archival material.

Two groups of archival documents are presently available to researchers on the DHH website. There are the Canadian Army Overseas Honours and Award, scanned images of the original 54-volume Canadian Army Overseas honours and awards citations for the Second World War. There are also the Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) and Army Headquarters (AHQ) reports compiled between 1940 and 1959 and forming the basis for the future official history of the Canadian Army. In addition, the following material have been scanned but are not available on the DHH website: the Canadian Daily Record, a First World War newspaper detailing the activities of the Canadian Expeditionary Force; the Militia Reports for 1864, 1866-1930; and the catalogue cards to the Kardex and Document Collections.

Despite the limited resources and budget restraints, it is still the goal to make DHH's holdings more widely available and more

easily accessible. The Archives has, therefore, sought collaborative partnerships with other corporate bodies inside and outside DND. Partnerships will allow both organizations to provide unprecedented and free online access to military collections, many of which have not been easily available in the past. They will also offer a wide range of collections and research tools to researchers. Finally, through such collaborative arrangements, the digitizing of military records will be achieved in a cost-effective manner.

The DHH Archives and its Collection

The History and Archives section of DHH, namely DHH 2, is responsible for fulfilling its primary role of researching and writing official histories of the Canadian Forces and DND. In addition to producing official histories, DHH 2 is tasked from time to time with the research and writing of commemorative histories to mark significant milestones in Canadian military history and other historical studies which will be useful to official historians in the future.

DHH maintains an archives and library section to support the research and writing of official histories. The following resources are available to the general public:

1. Document Collection (1971-2012): Includes all documents, reports and narratives received between 1971 and 2012. Includes new material on peacekeeping and the former Royal Canadian Navy Historical Section archives.
2. Kardex Collection: Includes papers from the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force Historical Sections, mainly between 1939 and 1964.
3. Biographical Files: Open working files for many Canadian servicemen and civilians, of all ranks and professions, and for some selected foreigners.
4. Permanent Reference Files (PRFs): Working files of booklets, newspaper clippings, photographs and similar ephemeral materials for Canadian bases in Canada and abroad, Canadian units, Canadian ships, squadrons of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Canadian Forces, and aircraft types, both Canadian and foreign.
5. Steiger Collection: Includes documents in the German language and translated into English relating to research on specific aspects of the First World War; lists of documents held in other archives; and some secondary published material about German military history in general.
6. Public Record Office (PROs): Includes documents photocopied in London for research on the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy histories, records of the Admiralty and related bodies concerning all aspects of the organization and operations of the Royal Navy and associated naval forces, as well

as records of the Air Ministry, the Royal Air Force and related bodies relating to the development of military aviation and the aviation component of the armed forces.

7. Pamphlet Collection: A small collection of training pamphlets of Canadian and British origin.
8. Annual Historical Reports: Annual reports submitted by every Canadian Forces unit each year.

1. Partnership with the Archives Association of Ontario and Archeion

Archeion is Ontario's Archival Information Network. It is a publicly available, bilingual, online, searchable gateway to descriptions of archival records located in Ontario. There are currently over 8000 descriptions available for search and display. Online users can perform full-text and keyword searches, basic and advanced searches, or browse name, title and repository indexes. The DHH Archives has 534 fonds level descriptions in Archeion and approximately 100 more descriptions to submit. As a result most fonds level descriptions from the Archives' Inmagic DBTextworks Fonds database are available online to researchers.

2. Partnership with Canadian University Military History Programs

In the effort to have their finding aids, card catalogues and other research tools as accessible as possible to researchers on other websites, the DHH Archives has entered into an agreement with the following university programs: the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, Wilfred Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario; the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta; and the Milton F. Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB.

The following research tools have been copied onto a compact disk and mailed to the universities: the card catalogue for the Document Collection; the card catalogue for the Kardex Collection; the finding aids to the Document Collection (1971-2011); the finding aids to the Public Records Office (PROs); the Permanent Reference Files (PRFs); and the Steiger Collection

3. Partnership with Ancestry.ca

DHH is working with Ancestry.ca, the world's largest family history website, to put DHH records online on their website. The material consists of First and Second World War military records, in English and stored as microfilm, index cards or books. They contain an estimated total image count of 300,000 and an estimated total name count of 500,000. According to the agreement the records will appear on the Ancestry.ca website for about nine months after the completion of scanning of all material. They will then provide DHH with a full set of copies of the digital images on hard drives or other agreed media.

The following DHH records will be scanned:

1. 76/10 - RCAF Canadian Forces Records Centre Card collection: Approximately 200,000 abbreviated service record cards of Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)

airmen and officers on 114 microfilm reels. Information on the cards includes name, rank, nationality, birth date, service number, non-operational postings with date, and trade.

2. 77/661 - Canadian War Records Office Card Collection: Approximately 5000 information cards containing the name, rank, unit/squadron, transfers, brief history, occupation prior to joining military, and extra remarks on Canadians in the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force during the First World War.
3. 2003/11 - Canadian Army Historical Section Card Collection: Approximately 10,000 Canadian Army Second World War casualty cards (Wounded and Missing in Action)).
4. Militia Lists (Bound books) – 1761-1938: These lists will supplement those lists from Library and Archives Canada that are already on the Ancestry.ca website.

4. Partnership with Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and Canadian Naval Technical History Association (CNTHA)

The CNTHA is a volunteer organization, many of whom are retired Naval Engineers, working in support of DHH to preserve Canada's naval technical history. One of the ongoing initiatives of CNTHA has been the interviewing of Naval Engineers, government and industry officials past and present and recording these oral interviews. DHH has offered its financial support in this endeavour, and a good number of interviews have already been completed and transcripts forwarded to DHH. However, because the DHH Archives does not have the proper storage facilities for cassette tapes, these have been transferred to Library and Archives Canada. Consideration is being given to recording the interviews digitally and have them and transcripts available for download on the DHH and/or the CNTHA websites.

5. Partnership with the Royal 22nd Regiment Museum

In 2014, the Royal 22nd Regiment will be 100 years old. As part of celebrations for the 100th anniversary, the Royal 22nd Regiment Museum is expanding. Located in the Citadel since 1950, the Museum has compiled collections and archives on the military history of Quebec City, in particular that of the Royal 22nd Regiment. One of their projects is the complete digitizing of the Jean Victor Allard fonds (84/126). He was the first French-Canadian to become the Chief of Defence Staff and in December 1943 he became the Commanding Officer of the Regiment in Italy. Each of the stages of Allard's life is documented. From his childhood, to his personal participation in the Second World War, the Korean War, as well as Canada's more general involvement, to his years in the USSR and West Germany, to his role in the unification of the armed forces and his time as Chief of Defence staff. The fonds will be scanned into digital images entirely by the Regiment over the next year, and a copy of all images will be

donated to the DHH Archives for researchers. The Allard fonds will be the first completely digitized fonds/collection to be available to researchers at the Archives and on the DHH website.

Conclusion

It is the goal of the DHH Archives to make its holdings, finding aids, card catalogues and other research tools more widely available and more easily accessible at any time of the day from anywhere in Canada or the world. We have scanned some of the

material, but it will be some time before they can be put on the DHH website. Moreover, at the present time the DHH Archives could not possibly make other material available in a proposed time frame and in such a cost-effective manner to the public without the assistance of a partner. Through such collaborative arrangements, the Archives will receive expertise, experience and person hours that are required for digitizing these records. The scanning of material will be achieved in a cost-effective manner. In most cases, there would be no cost to DHH and the Archives.