Royal BC Museum
Digital Strategy

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January 14, 2016

ROYAL BC MUSEUM

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This document represents the Royal BC Museum's digital strategy from 2015-2020. It is the result of an internal and external consultation process and outlines the digital directions for the museum and archives over the next five years. Digital is fluid; while this is a solid blueprint for future digital growth this strategy will change as the organization, its audiences and technologies evolve.

VISION

To create a borderless digital museum and archives commons that connects people, collections, research and ideas through online access and dialogue.

GOALS

1. Build Capacity
2. Expand Engagement
3. Increase Preservation and Access
4. Revitalize Learning
5. Produce Revenue
6. Create Partnerships

Museums and archives are redefining themselves for the digital age; this is a transformation that touches all aspects of visitor services, learning, collections, research and operations. The Royal BC Museum is also transforming, aiming to be a digital leader among museums and archives. A strong digital presence that allows access to collections, programs and research and dialogue with experts both internal and external will be crucial to this goal. These aims speak directly to the Royal BC Museum's forward-thinking strategic goal of strengthening digital infrastructure and reputation.

Digital affords a wide array of opportunities including:

- Offering content in a variety of world languages, and in local First Nations dialects through thoughtful partnerships,

- Providing active and compelling learning programs that augment provincial curriculum to schools across British Columbia,

- Sharing collections data providing new research opportunities

- Partnering with some of the brightest and best companies and institutions to jointly create world-class initiatives

- Leveraging online dialogue opportunities through social media and digital platforms.

This strategy will connect the museum and archives together and link it to the world - using technology strategically with specific, well-researched audiences in mind and the service needs of the Royal BC Museum at heart. Digital can strengthen the work being done to complete strategic priorities, but as a lean organization it needs to be purposeful and balanced with other priorities. We will not fund fashionable digital products simply for the sake of a digital presence.

With this strategy the organization has a solid roadmap to guide the digital development of the museum and archives for the next five years.

The Royal BC Museum thanks the individuals who contributed to this document including both an enthusiastic internal working group and an external advisory committee with representatives from private sector, the First Nations community, the University of Victoria and the Museum of Vancouver.

SECTION A | CRITICAL ISSUES

While the Royal BC Museum is moving rapidly to offer full digital access to collections and research, there are critical issues that this strategy addresses.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Digital access to the collection is a key tenet of this strategy. Currently, the organization is replacing two proprietary and entirely discrete collection management systems. These two legacy systems have no capacity to integrate. Their replacements, Integrated Museum Management (IMM) and Access to Memory (AtoM), are built over non-proprietary, highly portable technology platforms to allow for tight integration. The new systems are fully customizable and will evolve into the organization's primary collection management system. Future growth is predicated on having solid infrastructure that is nimble and evolves, while maintaining data integrity and security as well as interconnectivity between systems to allow for federated searching. As the museum collection management system is currently under development, planned interconnectivity not yet begun, this necessary foundation is still a few years of away and requires ongoing investment. Maintenance and growth of these systems will also require significant investment to ensure they function as required and remain a strong, solid foundation.

Critical issues:

- Complete development of the museum collection management system (IMM) and replacement of proprietary systems using a mixture of in-house expertise and a contracted technology firm.

- Maintain and grow the collections systems to meet internal and external demands within reasonable and realistic budgets.

DIGITAL ACCESS AND DIALOGUE

Seven new digital platforms have launched in the last two years. Half of those platforms (e.g. 100 Objects of Interest) present content to emphasize the importance and quality of the Royal BC Museum's collection. The other half present collections and research but also allow for interaction and dialogue. For example, the Learning Portal invites the public and educators to reassemble collections content into playlists and upload resources to suit their learning outcomes. Access and dialogue go hand in hand, but both require ongoing staff resources and participation. If opportunities for dialogue falter, and if we stop adding fresh content to our growing digital platforms, web audiences will not return. It is crucial that the organization create digital products that match audience's interests and meet strategic priorities - we need to be particular in what we produce.

Critical issues:

- With limited resources dedicated to digital growth it is essential that products are developed with the audience in mind, but also with realistic, measureable outputs.

- The more we develop, the more resources are necessary for maintenance.

REVENUE GENERATION

With revenue critical to the organization, digital offers a partially untapped annual audience of more than a million per year (the Royal BC Museum received 1.2 million online visitors during the 2014/15 fiscal year). While a growing online shop offers merchandise opportunities, online ticket sales are an area of growth for both revenue and an improved customer service experience. Currently the Royal BC Museum sells only 2% of tickets online. Recent analysis by the digital team suggests online visitors are dropping off from the website during the cumbersome check-out process, and mobile sales are almost nonexistent. Whether or not these visitors follow through and buy their tickets at the box office is unknown. What we do know is that many other museums achieve 10% online sales, and still others as high as 30%. There is clearly much greater potential for online ticket sales.

Critical issues:

- The corporate website is often the first stop for visitors. With admission revenue an important part of the budget, critical content such as hours and exhibitions must be easy to find and processes such as ticket sales are seamless among all platforms including mobile.

INTERNAL ADOPTION

Digital as a whole should no longer just be the responsibility of one department both in content creation and mindset. To be successful, digital needs to be a component of the entire organization. An internal survey showed a significant portion of staff don't engage with our online products or social media – the main point of contact for the museum and archives with its online visitors – indicating a current staff that is disconnected with the digital future of the museum.

Critical issues:

- Digital platforms and content are the responsibility of single departments. While coordination is necessary to ensure limited resources are working towards common goals, digital creation and idea generation should happen throughout the organization.

- Development of a workforce that understands the potential and importance of digital for access to collections and research and has the necessary tools to participate in a digital landscape.

Section B | Approach

Critical issues are decision points and catalysts for change. The Royal BC Museum has been at a digital crossroads for some time, perhaps without realizing it, but this strategy represents a profound shift in the organization, a clear recognition that we need a more focused and coordinated response to the opportunities digital initiatives afford.

Tackling the critical issues above requires a dual focus: an emphasis on high quality digital platforms for external audiences, and a greater effort to increase our internal digital capacity on all fronts including staff skills and training, backbone infrastructure, and leveraging partnerships.

The vision and goals following reflect our approach with that dual focus. We will look inside and outside the museum and archives to deliver seamless, world-class digital programming.

Section C | Vision Statement

To create a borderless digital museum and archives commons that connects people, collections, research and ideas through online access and dialogue.

Section D | Goals

The following is an aggressive set of goals and objectives. Innovation is one of the strongest tools that the museum and archives can use to achieve these goals. New ideas, new ways of doing things and embracing risk and the rewards that come with it will be essential to meet strategic priorities.

As well, the institution will need to adopt more efficient ways of working. To achieve these goals, content cannot just be created as a one-off, we need to embrace the notion of COPE - create once, publish everywhere – and fully utilize our limited resources across the organization.

GOAL 1: BUILD CAPACITY

Determine our current state with an eye towards continual improvement of staff skills, digital tools, and our technological base.

Addresses: *infrastructure, internal adoption.*

Objectives and Implementation

A) Determine our current state, establish benchmarks.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
2016-17	Establish online benchmarks to gauge future success, perform a digital maturity gap analysis to highlight weaknesses.	Archives, Access and Digital (AAD)
2016-17	Undertake an accurate inventory of digital records.	AAD

B) Build staff capacity in digital content creation and thinking.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
Ongoing	Support professional development related to digital training in staff work plans.	Human Resources (HR), AAD
Ongoing	Foster a culture that supports digital initiatives, including building capacity with new employees.	HR, AAD
Ongoing	Encourage internal cross-department collaboration through training/retraining of staff on current digital content platforms. Streamline training resources using train-the-trainer methods.	AAD

C) Use digital space to improve staff communications.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
2017-18	Create and resource a social media-type digital platform for staff and volunteer communication, connections and celebration.	AAD, Marketing and New Business

D) Plan and implement IT solutions that will allow for necessary digital growth.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
2016-17	Enhance wireless systems and infrastructure to support onsite content delivery.	Information Technology (IT)
Ongoing	Encourage the digital tools necessary to access and fully support collection management software and future digital and infrastructure growth. Allow teams to pilot non-standard software to learn quickly with little risk.	IT, AAD

E) Plan for future protection and storage of born-digital collections.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
2016-17	Investigate a funded digital archivist position to help prepare the archives for future digital collections.	AAD, HR
2016-17	Create a plan and process for born-digital records.	AAD
2017-18	Develop a web archiving system to accurately capture and preserve digital content.	AAD
2018-19	Develop the necessary infrastructure to hold and access born-digital records; long-term planning to ensure the security of digital records with a trusted digital repository.	AAD

GOAL 2: EXPAND ENGAGEMENT

Expand digital engagement internally and externally to promote dialogue and active participation by a wider audience.

Addresses: digital access and dialogue.

Objectives and Implementation

A) Create easy-to-use, accessible and responsive platforms and tools in multiple languages to allow users to engage with collections.		
Completion Year	**Output**	**Responsibility**
2015-16	Adding to the existing smartphone tour with multi-lingual options starting with simplified Chinese and French.	AAD
2015-16	Create focus groups to engage audiences and ensure products developed meet their needs and interest.	AAD
2016-17	Offer inclusive digital content in a variety of languages including BC First Nations languages. Work with Google and First Peoples Cultural Council to include a First Nations language into Google Translate.	AAD
2016-17	To accompanying the 2017 exhibition Families, create a digital portal to encourage archival and genealogical research into the collections.	AAD, Collections, Knowledge and Engagement (CKE)
2016-17	Create a First Nations-curated portion of our website and translate into a BC aboriginal language.	AAD, CKE
2016-17	Refresh the corporate website with an eye to improved usability so key content for visitors is easily found, ensure there are multiple pathways within the site for easy access to collections searches, research and other key digital content. Create portals (e.g. First Nations) so key content can be grouped and easily found.	AAD, Marketing and New Business
2016-17	Develop a Royal BC Museum Speakers' Bureau to provide easier access to museum and archives experts.	AAD, Marketing and New Business

B) Create a long term relationship with the visitor by better connecting the onsite visitor with the museum and archives digital presence.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
AR - 2016-17 Experimentation - Ongoing	Experiment with technologies that visitors are using – such as augmented reality - to bring to life museum exhibitions.	AAD, Exhibitions, Learning
2017-18	Incorporate digital connections within current and future exhibitions that offer an incentive for visitors to continue to connect with the Royal BC Museum after they finish their visit.	AAD, Exhibitions

C) Use social media and our digital platforms as a stronger digital communication tool.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
2016-17	Create a digital communication plan that supports institutional priorities including access to collections, research and learning, fundraising, reputation management and community relations and identifies necessary resourcing. This strategy will be integrated into the overall communications strategy and will be updated annually.	Marketing and New Business, Learning, AAD

GOAL 3: INCREASE PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

Continue efforts to digitize large portions of the collection and improve accessibility for the public, partners, and colleagues.

Addresses: *digital access and dialogue infrastructure.*

Objectives and Implementation

A) Digitally convert collections for greater access and preservation using standardized policies and procedures.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
2015-16	Increase digitization initiatives utilizing volunteers and using online audiences with further crowd-sourced initiatives, create long-term targets for digitization and significantly increase the amount of digitized content without major impacts to staff resources.	AAD
2016-17	Create and implement strategies for at-risk media including magnetic media.	AAD
2016-17	Create priority plan to digitize First Nations A/V collection and determine access and ownership.	Collections, Knowledge and Engagement (CKE), AAD

B) Provide opportunities for researchers and access to research.		
Completion Year	**Output**	**Responsibility**
Ongoing	Review and, where necessary, clean existing metadata for museum and archives collections.	CKE, AAD
2017-18	Expand the research portal, sharing museum and archives research initiatives, offering opportunities to share and discuss research from a variety of sources concerning collections.	CKE, AAD
2017-18	Explore geographic information system (GIS) to add context and location to archival and museum material.	AAD
2019-20	Provide opportunities for audiences including researchers, to import and modify collections data creating new opportunities and data sets. Partner with other organizations to combine data creating richer data creating new opportunities to explore collections.	CKE, AAD

C) Create stable archives and museum collection and media management systems and the interconnectivity that allows for federated searches throughout collections.		
Completion Year	**Output**	**Responsibility**
2016-17 IMM 2017-18 DAM	Continue to grow AtoM (archives collection search), complete development of IMM (museum collection search) and look at alternates for the current digital asset management system which is cumbersome to use and expensive to maintain.	AAD
2018-19	Create a bridge between the collection management systems and the digital asset management system to encourage simple searches of the entire collection.	AAD
2019-20	Extend that bridge to the crowd-sourced transcription platform to accurately match transcription/translation data with collection records.	AAD

D) Create exhibition interactives that engage audiences.		
Completion Year	**Output**	**Responsibility**
2016-17	Create a long term strategy that addresses the need for new permanent gallery exhibition interactives, examines feasibility of in-house development and plans for meaningful data capture from visitors.	AAD, Exhibitions

GOAL 4: REVITILAZE LEARNING

Revitalize learning with strong digital opportunities and a dynamic, interactive platform.

Addresses: *digital access and dialogue.*

Objectives and Implementation

A) Grow existing online learning tools with new ways to interact with experts and collections.		
Completion Year	**Output**	**Responsibility**
Ongoing	Actively curate and continuously expand the Learning Portal with fresh content, features and learning tutorials. A minimum of 10 new pathways will be created annually. Video will be created if adequate resources exist.	Learning, AAD
2015-16	Create a manual for the Learning Portal, this, along with support from AAD, will widen the pool of content creators.	Learning
2016-17	Create a teacher resource strategy focused on online learning plans and other digital support material.	Learning
2016-17	Create a mobile Learning strategy including an evaluation of Wifarer content and use.	Learning, AAD. Marketing and New Business
2017-18	Establish annual teachers professional development workshop focused on digital learning opportunities, offer on-line access both live and recorded.	Learning

B) Engage more online audiences with the Royal BC Museum Learning Program.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
2016-17	Conduct interactive digital classrooms to provide access to the museum and archives experts, research and collections.	Learning
2017-18	Create more educational partnerships with the goal of having the Learning Portal fully integrated into BC curriculum and all schools in the province interacting with it.	Learning
2017-18	Provide a platform for youth and adult learning and distance courses, platform dependent on a feasibility study and Ministry of Education curriculum.	AAD, Learning

GOAL 5: PRODUCE REVENUE

Increase digital revenue by offering new products and creating a seamless sales process.

Addresses: *revenue generation.*

Objectives and Implementation

A) Ensure an easy sales process for customers.		
Completion Year	Output	Responsibility
2016-17	Enhance the POS system and create an easy-to-use, mobile responsive ticketing system that improves the process for online ticket sales and includes cross promotional opportunities benefiting e-commerce, membership and development.	Finance, AAD, Marketing and New Business, Development

B) Create new digital products.		
Completion Year	**Output**	**Responsibility**
2016-17	Utilize the existing publishing catalogue to create e-books, interactive books and field guide apps.	AAD, Marketing and New Business
2016-17	Explore an online membership to entice a digital audience that is interested in the Royal BC Museum but may never visit in person.	AAD, Marketing and New Business
Ongoing	Build the online store with a greater portfolio of products including a significant inventory of publishing material.	AAD, Marketing and New Business RBCM
2018-19	Create further opportunities with the onsite audience with print on demand and leverage iconic museum and archives images within galleries to provide personalized merchandise visitors can purchase during their visits.	AAD, Marketing and New Business, Exhibitions

GOAL 6: CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

Create partnerships that fill gaps in internal digital knowledge and tap into innovation taking place outside museum and archives walls.

Addresses: digital access and dialogue.

Objectives and Implementation

A) Establish stronger networks with new external and non-traditional partners.		
Completion Year	**Output**	**Responsibility**
2016-17	Partner with academic institutions, museums and archives to share knowledge. Create an external digital working group to guide this process.	CKE, AAD
Ongoing	Create opportunities within professional organizations such as the BC and Canadian museums and archives associations, International Council of Museums and International Council of Archives to offer leadership and allow for further knowledge sharing.	CKE, AAD
2016-17	Investigate private sector partnerships to help us exploit new technologies and learning, opportunities that, with limited staff resources we might otherwise not have access to. In return, provide a sandbox for local technology companies to explore technologies and potential revenue sharing ventures.	Learning, AAD
2016-17	Create partnerships with universities, archives and other relevant organizations to collaborate on the creation of thesauri and taxonomies and explore resource description frameworks and linked open data with the aim of improving collections searches.	CKE, AAD
2016-17	Create a partnership plan to help fund digitization initiatives.	AAD, Development

Section E | Evaluation

Key to any strategy is clear and measurable tools to regularly use to evaluate objectives. Below are the key performance indicators we will use to evaluate this strategy. A digital gap analysis will be performed; this may inform future key performance indicators.

a) Web analytics including sessions, users, page views, pages per session/average session duration, bounce rate and conversion goals.

b) Social media analytics including: follower count, engagement rate and sentiment analysis.

c) Revenue generation including increases in online ticket sales, membership sales and renewals, online giving and merchandise sales.

d) Visitor surveys and focus group engagement.

e) Percent of the museum and archive's collection digitized and available online.

f) Number of online projects developed and audience engagement with them.

g) Adoption rates for new programs.

h) Earned media.

i) Number of external collaborations and partnerships.

j) Internal assessments of programs and projects.

APPENDIX A

Benchmarks

While digital is a pervasive aspect of museum and archives work, there are surprisingly few institutions with digital strategies. Below are a few standouts:

The Andy Warhol Museum Digital Strategy
https://github.com/thewarholmuseum/digital-strategy

The City of Vancouver
http://vancouver.ca/your-government/digital-strategy.aspx

Europeana
http://pro.europeana.eu/files/Europeana_Professional/Publications/Europeana%20Business%20Plan%202014.pdf

Library and Archives Canada
Not yet released to the public.

Tate Digital Strategy 2013–15:
Digital as a Dimension of Everything
http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/tate-digital-strategy-2013-15-digital-dimension-everything

APPENDIX B

Audience

The Royal BC Museum audience is quite varied.

Internal audience:
- staff and volunteers

External audience:
- members
- researchers
- donors/funders
- audience with potential to visit
- audience without potential to visit

APPENDIX C

Consultation Process

To help guide this strategy, staff coordinated a consultation process was conducted that included:

a) A survey with external audiences (609 responses)

b) A survey with internal staff audiences (45 responses)

c) Workshops with an internal working group representing a cross section of the museum and archives

d) A youth workshop

e) Consultation with an external working group and other peers with representatives from the University of Victoria, the Museum of Vancouver, the City of Vancouver and local technology company Revenue Wire.