



Criteria for the Canada Memory of the World Register

These criteria conform to section 4.1.6 of the *UNESCO Memory of the World: General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage*, which states:

“Selection criteria for regional and national registers will use the criteria for the international register as a template, making the logical variations, and may incorporate additional criteria appropriate to the regional or national context.”

Preamble

As assessment is comparative and relative, there can be no absolute measure or definition of cultural significance. Selection for inclusion in the Canada Memory of the World Register will therefore result from assessing the heritage item on its own merits against the selection criteria presented here.

The Canada Memory of the World Register is an ever-evolving list of documentary heritage representing Canada’s linguistic, cultural, geographic, gender, spiritual, political, scientific, economic and artistic development and diversity since the beginning of the occupation of the territory. As such, the Register includes documentary heritage that records notable events of Canada’s story, from the broadest perspective to regions, communities and individuals. Documentary heritage on the Register can range from single items to whole collections.

The Register is part of the nation’s documentary heritage and, thus, is owned by all Canadians. There will be no distinction between documentary heritage created in the public or private sector and the documentary heritage owned by people or legal entities.

Documentary heritage consists of both its content and its carrier; properties of each of these individually, or combined, can be considered to imbue documentary heritage with significance

All forms of documentary heritage and all documentary heritage creators are equal under the Canada Memory of the World Register.

Please note that inclusion in the Canada Memory of the World Register does not automatically guarantee that provincial or federal authorities will make a determination of significance with respect to any holdings or collection inscribed in the Register.

Definition of Canada

The Canada Memory of the World Register defines the word 'Canada' as follow:

The geographical area now known as Canada has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Metis and Inuit) since time immemorial. Indigenous peoples' ancestral connections to this land reach back to time and as such are defined by, but not limited to, traditional knowledge, oral histories, kinship, alliances, occupations, travel routes, trade networks, the use and stewardship of natural resources, cultures and languages. Over time, people from all over the world have also made Canada their home.

Recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Memory and Knowledge

The Canada Memory of the World Register recognizes that the Indigenous peoples of Canada transfer, teach, understand, and share their histories and stories in unique ways. Indigenous peoples own their histories and stories. They decide when, if and how to submit items to the Canada Memory of the World Register. Inscription on the Register does not infringe on Indigenous peoples' ownership, control, access and possession of their histories and stories.

The Canada Memory of the World Register recognizes Indigenous peoples' rights as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Joinet-Orentlicher Principles.

Recognizing Cultural and Social Diversity

The Canada Memory of the World Register recognizes that in Canada is a highly diverse society composed of communities based on geography, language, ethnicity, culture, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, spirituality and many other factors. The power and influence of these communities have varied over time. Communities that once formed a majority in a specific region or era may now be in the minority. Communities that were once invisible, shunned or persecuted now form part of the mainstream. Other communities still struggle for recognition.

Selection criteria

When considering documentary heritage for inclusion in the Canada Memory of the World Register, the item will be **first** assessed against its **authenticity**: is it what it appears to be? Have its identity and provenance been reliably established? Copies, replicas, forgeries, bogus documents or hoaxes can, with the best intentions, be mistaken for the genuine article.

Second, it must be **unique and irreplaceable**, something whose disappearance or deterioration would constitute a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of Canada. It must have created great impact over a span of time and/or within a particular cultural area of our country. It must have had great influence - whether positive or negative – on the course of our history.

Third, the **significance** must be demonstrated in meeting *one or more* of the criteria set out below.

1. Time

Documentary heritage is of Canadian significance if it is especially evocative of its time (which may have been a time of crisis, or significant social or cultural change). It can reflect in a unique way a period of important change in our history or makes a contribution to our understanding of Canada at a particular time.

Questions: Does the document represent a new discovery or is it the "first of its kind?"

2. Place

Documentary heritage is of Canadian significance if it contains meaningful information about a locality or region which made an important contribution to Canadian history or culture.

Questions: For example, was the location or region itself an important influence on the events or phenomena represented by the document? Does it describe physical environments, cities or institutions that have since vanished?

3. People and Society

Documentary heritage is of Canadian significance if it has a special association with the life or works of a person, people, community or society that has made a meaningful contribution to Canadian history or culture.

Questions: Does the cultural context in which the documentary heritage was created reflect significant aspects of human behaviour, or of social, industrial, artistic or political development? Or does it capture the essence of great movements, transitions, advances or regression? Does it illustrate the lives of prominent individuals? Does it document an important debate, including demands for recognition and representation in Canadian society?

4. Subject and Theme

Documentary heritage is of Canadian significance if it documents an important subject or major theme of Canadian history or culture.

Questions: Does the subject matter of the document represent particular historical or intellectual development in the natural, social and human sciences? Or in education, culture, communications, politics, ideology, and sports?

5. Form and Style

Documentary heritage is of Canadian significance if it is an important example of a distinctive form or style.

Questions: Does the documentary heritage represent a particular form or style? Styles can include visual, oral or written presentations and customs. Forms can include all types of mediums and formats.

6. Spiritual and Community Significance

Documentary heritage is of Canadian significance if it has social, cultural or spiritual value which has made important contributions to Canada and its peoples.

Questions: Does the documentary heritage have an emotional hold, meaning or relevance for people in Canada? Is it venerated today, or was it venerated in the past, for its spiritual or traditional qualities, or its association with significant people(s), culture(s) and events?

Finally, the following matters will also be taken into account when assessing the documentary heritage proposed to the Register:

- ◆ **Rarity:** does its content or physical nature make it a rare surviving example of its type or time?
- ◆ **Integrity:** within the natural physical limitations of carrier survival, is it complete or partial? Has it been altered or damaged?
- ◆ **Threat:** Is its survival in danger? If it is secure, must vigilance be applied to maintain that security?
- ◆ **Management plan:** Is there a plan which reflects the significance of the documentary heritage, with appropriate strategies to preserve and provide access to it?