How to build a national library and archives website: Dynamic and user-centric design in LAC's new web presence

By
Andrea Eidinger, Ph.D.
A/Manager, Web at Library and Archives Canada

LAC's web presence, November 2021

The challenge

- Reimagining a website that had:

  - 7,000 pages, some of which hadn't been edited in 20 years
  - Valid critiques of outdated/offensive content

- Legacy databases

- Technological limitations

- LAC's *unique* role (web archiving, etc)

- Competing priorities, project fatigue and limited resources

Our objective

Create a user-centric, accessible, and dynamic website to enable Canadians to better connect with their documentary heritage.

What does this mean?

Dynamic

Regular updates in response to user-feedback.

User-centric

User-autonomy and improved access to our collections

Accessible

Plain language, consistency and accessible by design

01 02 03

Our workflow

Analysis

Consultation with stakeholders/clients/subject matter experts

- Establish a minimum viable product

Design

UXE testing and mockups

- Create templates, information architecture, navigation
- Treasury Board Secretariat/Canada.ca requirements
- Official language requirements

Creation

Populating pages with material

- Plain language
- Formal approval process
- Coding

Art

art and photography

photography

maps, charts and architectural plans

music, films and videos

Arts and culture

audiovisual

photography

cartography

art

N: fine arts

audiovisual

music

M: music

military and maritime

Military heritage

military heritage

Military heritage

military heritage

U: military science

V: naval science

first world war

second world war

Military, war and defence

postal heritage and philately

postal heritage

sports

biography and people

A: General works

miscellaneous

Smorgasbord

online collections

disasters

P: Language and literature

literature

educational resources

L: Education

exploration and [settlement]

exploration and settlement

records for current legal purposes

Official publications/public services

Government documents

politics and government

J: Political science

political engagement, advocacy and activism

Govern[ment]

Government records and official publications

medieval and early modern history

foreign and colonial

E and F: history of the Americas

D: World history and history of Europe, Asia, Africa

political and econom[ic] histo[ry]

Economy and finance

Indigenous heritage

Indigenous affairs

indigenous heritage

indigenous heritage

indigenous heritage

Research resources

gardening and cooking

transportation and travel

Transportation

transportation

Transportation

land records

F: Geography, anthropology and recreation

land and maps

land and treaties

Q: Science

Science and environment

Environment and ecology

S: Agriculture

C: Auxiliary sciences of history

archaelogy

criminal justice and law enforcement

safety and security (law)

K: Law

criminals, courts and prisons

Private records

Trade and industry

labour

T: Technology

social and cultural history

archived collections/unusual

archived collections

cultural and society

H: Social sciences

B: Philosophy, psychology, religion

Immigration and displacement

ethno-cultural groups

Family history

family history

vital statistics

genealogy and family history

family history

Health

Health

R: medicine

newspapers

Published heritage

published material

Z: Bibliography

canadian theses

printing and publishing

national identity

social history

social diversity and inclusion

immigration

immigration and ethnic history

What was ready for launch

- A new URL (library-archives.canada.ca/ or bibliotheque-archives.canada.ca)
- A new navigational structure (based on themes, topics, and tasks)
- New content for three main topics (Indigenous history, military history, and family history/genealogy
- Searching Collection Search directly from the home page
- Migration of 18 legacy databases

What we've done since (9 months later)

- Launch of Census Search beta (integrating all 17 major census databases, 1825-1921)
- Adjustments to the navigational system to make it more user-friendly
- Relaunch of the ATIP system
- Relaunch of the database, Second World War Service Files - War Dead, 1939-1947
- Development of a feedback tracking system

Library and Archives Canada

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) helps Canadians gain a better understanding of who they are. It serves as the continuing memory of the federal government and its institutions and as the guardian of Canada's distant past and recent history. Discover who we are and what we do.

Collection Search

Search government records, books, newspapers, images and more 🔍

Learn more about Collection Search or try our other search tools.

Asian Heritage Month: An opportunity to highlight stories of determination

May is Asian Heritage Month!

Preparing the 1931 Census

The 1931 Census of Canada is coming soon! Here's what we are doing to bring you free access this summer

Services for publishers

Find out about Canadian publishers, International standard numbers (ISBN, ISSN, ISMN), CIP data and Legal deposit

Visit us

Come see us in person

Collection

Access Canada's documentary heritage through the resources available below.

Collection Search

Search government records, books, newspapers, images and more 🔍

Learn more about Collection Search or try our other search tools.

Search the collections

Access materials using our databases

Help with your research

Discover our guides and tools

Engage and learn

Take part in Canadian history yourself

Come visit

Find out how to book an appointment, order materials and visit us on site

The basics

New to research? Check out our tips and tricks for effective research here

Most requested

- A to Z tools and guides
- Ask us a question
- Census search
- First World War Personnel Records
- Genealogy and family history
- Image credits

Features

Preparing the 1931 Census

The 1931 Census of Canada is coming soon! Here's what we are doing to bring you free access this summer

Latest podcast episode

Catch up with the latest episode

Nations to Nations

Indigenous voices at Library and Archives Canada

Search the collections

Access our materials through one of the databases below

Collection Search

Search the collections available to the public at LAC

Census Search

Search Canada's census records all in one place

Library catalogue (Aurora)

Search our collection of published material

Search other institutions (Voilà)

Looking for material we don't have? Check Voilà

Theses Canada

Search our collection of theses and dissertations from Canadian universities

Public opinion research reports

Search our database of public opinion research reports from departments across the government

See our other databases and tools

▼ **Filter options**

Topic

Any ▾

Sub-topic

Any ▾

Type of guide

Database ▾

[Filter] [Reset]

Filter items [　　　　　]

Showing 1 to 10 of 58 entries (filtered from 153 total entries) | Show 10 ▾ entries

Title ⬆⬇	Guide description ⬆⬇
Births, Marriages and Deaths Recorded in Canada	Find information on family events like births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials.
Black Loyalist Refugees - Port Roseway Associates	This database contains references to Black Loyalists who joined the Port Roseway Associates during the evacuation of New York.
Cabinet Conclusions, 1944 to 1979	These documents include agendas, lists of attendees and summaries of discussions.

Help with your research

Want to do a deep dive into a particular topic, or just want to browse our records? Click on the tiles below to access our research guides and other resources on a variety of subjects.

Genealogy and family history

Discover your family heritage and learn about your ancestors

Indigenous history

Learn about the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation

Military history

Explore the history of Canadians at war

A to Z tools and guides

Searching for help on other topics? This is the place to look

Did you find what you were looking for? [Yes] [No]

[⧉ Share this page]

Date modified: 2023-02-01

Genealogy and family history

There are many records that can help you learn more about your ancestor's experiences, including the census, naturalization records, imigration records, and military records. Read on to find resources that can help you with your research.

Census records

Search and access copies of censuses

Immigration records

Use these general instructions on using immigration records to do genealogical research

Citizenship and naturalization

Resources for researching citizenship and naturalization records

First World War - Personnel records

Search the service records for servicemembers who served in the First World War, 1914 to 1918

Employment records

Researching a person's employment, including those who were self-employed

Research guides and other resources

▼ Filter options

Topic
[Any ⌄]

Sub-topic
[Any ⌄]

Type of guide
[Any ⌄]

[Filter] [Reset]

Filter items [   ]   Showing 1 to 10 of 88 entries | Show [10 ⌄] entries

Title ⬆⬇	Guide description ⬆⬇
Acadians	Find resources for researching the family history and genealogy of Acadians
Acts of Divorce, 1841-1968	Search this database for references to names found in Acts of Divorce.
Appendix to Finding Aid 300	This is a list of some early local censuses for Nova Scotia, Ontario and PEI.
Births, Marriages and Deaths Recorded in Canada	Find information on family events like births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials.

Example: Before (Black Canadian genealogy)

Black History in Canada

⚠ Historical language advisory: Read the notice about the collection.

- Research at Library and Archives Canada
- Research in published sources
- Research at other institutions and online

There has been a steady stream of migration of Black people into Canada via Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and the United States since the 17th century. The first recorded Black person to arrive in Canada was an African named Mathieu de Coste who arrived in 1608 to serve as interpreter of the Mi'kmaq language to the governor of Acadia. A few thousand Africans arrived in Canada in the 17th and 18th centuries as slaves. After the American Revolution, the British gave passage to over 3000 slaves and free Blacks who had remained loyal to the Crown. These Black Loyalists joined the many other United Empire Loyalists in settlements across the Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Other Black slaves joined their Loyalist slave owners when they migrated to Canada.

In 1793, the Upper Canada legislature passed an act that granted gradual abolition and any slave arriving in the province was automatically declared free. Fearing for their safety in the United States after the passage of the first *Fugitive Slave Law* in 1793, over 30,000 slaves came to Canada via the Underground Railroad until the end of the American Civil War in 1865. They settled mostly in southern Ontario, but some also settled in Quebec and Nova Scotia. Many returned to the United States to fight in the Civil War and rejoin their families after its end.

Other migrations of Black people from the United States occurred during the War of 1812, when over 2000 refugees came to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Another group of over 800 free Blacks from California migrated to Vancouver Island between 1858 and 1860. Many Black people migrated to Canada in search of work and became porters with the railroad companies in Ontario, Quebec, and the Western provinces or worked in mines in the Maritimes. Between 1909 and 1911 over 1500 migrated from Oklahoma as farmers and moved to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

In 1910 the government of Canada implemented a new *Immigration Act* that barred immigrants into Canada from races deemed undesirable and very few Black people entered Canada during the next few decades. In 1955, the *West Indian Domestic Scheme* permitted single women aged 18 to 35 and in good health to work in Canada as domestics for one year before being granted immigrant status. Over 2600 women were admitted under this scheme. In 1967, the government of Canada dropped the racially discriminatory immigration system, after which Black immigration rose dramatically.

Young girl.
Africville, Nova Scotia

Research at Library and Archives Canada

Library and Archives Canada holds many fonds relating to Black people. Some of the documents and fonds are listed below.

Port Roseway Associates, Muster Book of Free Blacks, Settlement of Birchtown, 1784 (MG 9 B9-14)

During the American Revolution, the British and Loyalist forces evacuated New York in 1783. Hundreds of Loyalist refugees joined together to form the Port Roseway Associates with the intention of finding new homes and creating a new settlement in Nova Scotia. These Loyalists, with their families, servants and slaves, founded the community of Port Roseway, shortly thereafter renamed Shelburne. The free Blacks amongst the Loyalists formed a separate enclave known as Birchtown. The Muster Book of Free Blacks who settled in Birchtown has been indexed and digitized in the following database:
Black Loyalist Refugees, 1782-1807- Port Roseway Associates

Ward Chipman, Muster Master's Office (1777-1785) (MG 23 D1)

This fonds contains muster rolls of Loyalists and their families belonging to regiments that were disbanded and settled in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (volumes 24 to 27, microfilm C-9818). It includes references to Black Loyalists, servants and free Blacks. The records have been indexed and digitized in the following database:
Loyalists in the Maritimes — Ward Chipman Muster Master's Office, 1777–1785

Book of Negroes (MG23 B1)

The Book of Negroes is contained within the British Headquarters Papers (microfilm M–369), also known as the Carleton Papers. It gives information such as names of the black Loyalists, health, distinguishing marks, status (free or slave), origins, names of their white associates and names of ships used to carry them. The names are indexed in the following database:
Carleton Papers – Book of Negroes, 1783

William King Collection (MG 24 J14)

Born in Scotland, William King came to Canada as a Free Church missionary and was active in the abolition struggle. He established the Elgin Settlement, designed for escaped slaves from the United States. He also assisted with the organization of a Black community near Chatham, Ontario. The Miscellaneous papers, 1836-1895, include his autobiography, correspondence and documents relating to the Buxton Mission and Elgin Association.
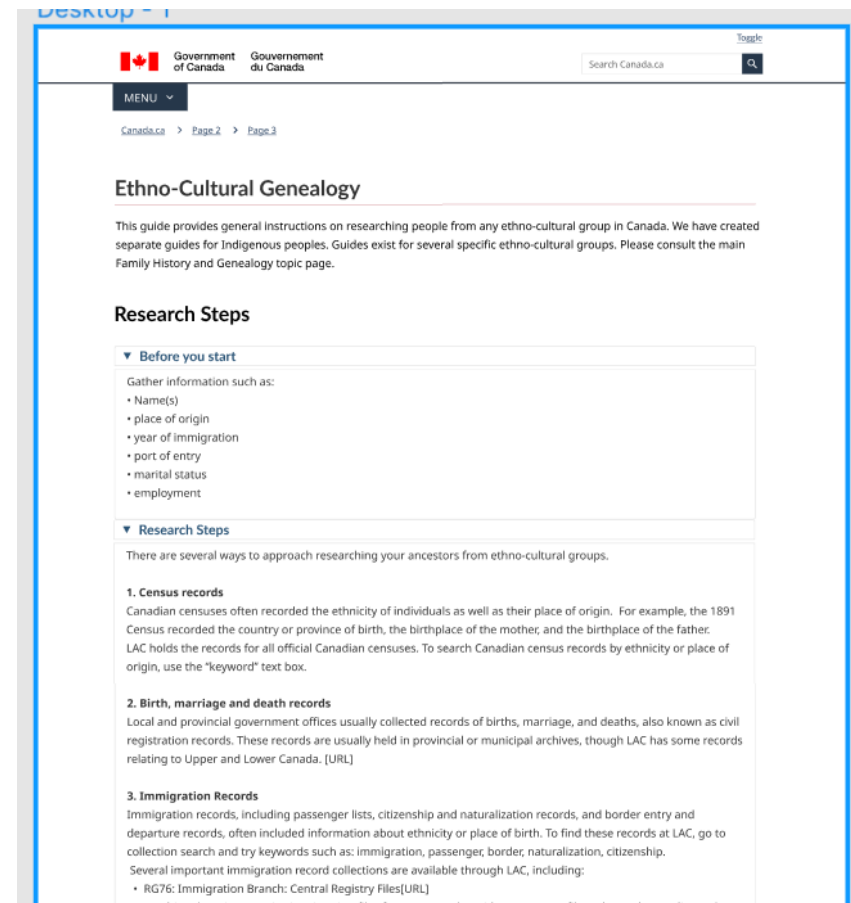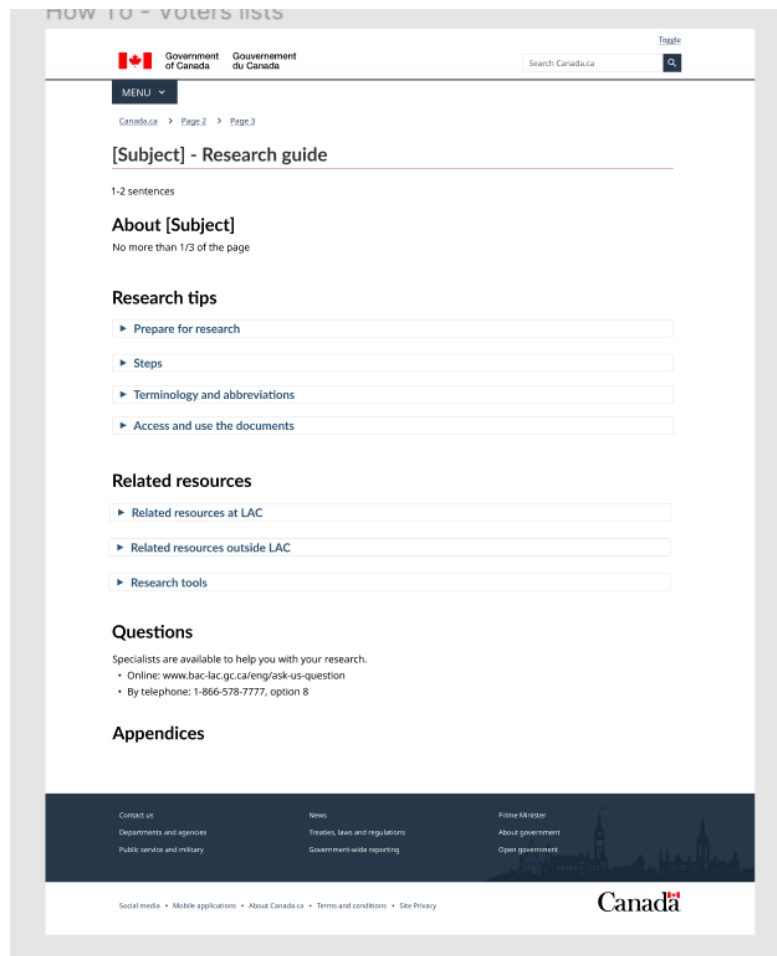
The William King collection includes a fuller description of the collection. Follow the *lower level descriptions* links to see more information and some digitized documents.

Great Britain: Treasury Office (MG 15 T28, microfilm C-13523)

The following pages contain references to Black people in Nova Scotia:

- A letter of G. Harrison to the Storekeeper General of 10 July 1816 concerning the disposition of stores delivered at Halifax for the use of Black refugees at Melville Island (vol. 14, p. 222)
- A letter from G. Harrison to the Commissioners of the Navy of 9 June 1821 concerning the removal of Black refugees from Halifax to Trinidad (vol. 19, p. 225)

Testing templates in Figma

The final page

Before and after

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Places to look

There are several ways to research the genealogy and family history of Black Canadians.

▶ 1. Census records

▼ 2. Immigration and citizenship records

These records usually include information about ethnicity and place of birth.

For more information, see:

- Immigration records (includes passenger lists and border entry records)
- Citizenship and naturalization records

You can find these records in Collection Search with keywords like **Black**, **African** or **Caribbean**, plus:

- immigrants
- list or lists
- a person's name
- a place in Canada or in the person's country of origin

Other related files we hold that might be helpful include:

- Canadian Pacific Railway requests admission of coloured porters (Blacks), 1931-1949 (volume 577, file 816222, parts 6-10, microfilms C-10652 and C-10653) and Coloured domestics from Guadeloupe, 1910-1928 (volume 475, file 731832, microfilm C-10411).
  - Note: The names in these two files are indexed in this database: Immigrants to Canada, Porters and Domestics, 1899-1949.
- Black Loyalist Refugees, Port Roseway Associates, 1782 to 1807
- Carleton Papers – Book of Negroes, 1783

▶ 3. Military and wartime records

▶ 4. Employment records

▶ 5. Historic Black communities

▶ 6. Community newspapers

▶ 7. Published sources

▶ 8. Genealogical societies

What you will see in the next few months

- My shared research lists
- My circulation requests
- Consolidated FWW databases
- 1931 Census
- Migration of the remaining legacy databases
- Introduction to the archive and archival research help pages
- More research help pages
- Relaunch of the Government of Canada Web Archive

We want to hear from you!

If you have feedback, please send to servicesweb-webservices@bac-lac.gc.ca

If you are interested in a more in-depth look at what we are doing and how it relates to your work, we are happy to present in more detail

Thank you!