

# Articles

## Deseronto Dreams: Archives, Social Networking Services, and Place<sup>1</sup>



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**RÉSUMÉ** La ville de Deseronto, en Ontario, estime que son centre d'archives devrait être à l'image de son château d'eau : une partie fiable, essentielle et visible de la communauté qu'il dessert, livrant son contenu au moment où il est demandé, avec le moins d'effort requis de la part de ses utilisateurs. Depuis 2007, les Deseronto Archives ont profité de services de réseautage social (SRS) afin de rendre accessibles leurs documents d'archives à un plus grand public que ne peut le faire leur salle de consultation, qui n'est ouverte qu'une journée sur semaine. En plaçant des documents numérisés et des informations d'actualité sur des SRS, les Deseronto Archives se sont attirées un grand nombre d'adeptes en ligne qui habitent à Deseronto, qui y ont habité, ou qui s'intéressent tout simplement à l'histoire de cette petite ville. Ce succès démontre, dans une certaine mesure, la pertinence continue des identités locales – du « lieu » – sur Internet, et la nature hybride en ligne/hors ligne de la culture contemporaine. En particulier, les auteurs se penchent sur les façons dont les SRS permettent la formation de « liens faibles » entre les Deseronto Archives et leurs utilisateurs en ligne. Ces liens faibles permettent aux utilisateurs de se façonner une identité en ligne, tout en permettant aux Deseronto Archives de démontrer leur pertinence institutionnelle et d'accroître le nombre de leurs utilisateurs et partisans bien au-delà des personnes disposées à visiter la salle de consultation durant les six heures qu'elle est ouverte chaque semaine.

**ABSTRACT** The vision in Deseronto, Ontario, is that the town's Archives should be like its water tower: a reliable, essential, and conspicuous part of the community it serves, delivering its contents whenever they are needed, with the minimum of effort on the part of the end user. Since 2007, the Deseronto Archives has taken advantage of a number of social networking services (SNS) to make its records available to a wider audience for more than the one day per week that its reading room is open. By posting digitized records and news items to SNS, Deseronto Archives has built an online

- 1 This paper has its roots in a presentation that co-author Greg Bak gave to the Association for Manitoba Archives Social Media Dialogue on 27 March 2014. Greg wishes to thank Sarah Story and the AMA for the invitation to present, as well as the participants in the dialogue for their helpful comments and discussion. The authors acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of this journal's reviewers and of Tom Nesmith at the University of Manitoba. Amanda Hill also wishes to thank the Council of the Town of Deseronto for the support that makes all of the Deseronto Archives' activities possible.

following of current and former Deserontonians and others who have taken an interest in this small town's history. This success goes some way to demonstrating the continuing relevance of local identities – of “place” – on the Internet and the hybrid online/off-line nature of contemporary culture. In particular, the authors consider how SNS allow the formation of “weak ties” between Deseronto Archives and its online users. These weak ties benefit users in creating their online identities and benefit the Deseronto Archives in demonstrating institutional relevance and allowing it to expand its base of users and supporters beyond those willing and able to visit the reading room during its six open hours per week.

The threshold between *here* (analogue, carbon-based, off-line) and *there* (digital, silicon-based, online) is fast becoming blurred.... The digital is spilling over into the analogue and merging with it.<sup>2</sup>

The Internet is presented sometimes as a place outside of space: a virtual place, perhaps in a cloud somewhere, where information can be endlessly replicated and accessed from anywhere on the globe, a place where the divisions of geography, socio-economic class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, age, and so on no longer apply.

Nonetheless, it is the view voiced by Luciano Floridi in the quotation above that is emerging as our new reality. Social networking services (SNS), such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, have created online counterparts to our offline friendships and professional networks. Peer-to-peer sharing platforms, such as Flickr and YouTube, in addition to institutional websites and access systems, have allowed archives to move their collections, or parts of them, online. Meanwhile, mobile computing is emerging as a game changer, repudiating the vision of the future in movies like *The Matrix*. In such films, physical existence is a mere matter of biological processes, while the life of the spirit and the mind occurs in an artificial, virtual world – a Second Life, lived through the actions of our avatars, more real and more consequential than our biological life. Current reality, however, suggests that it is computing power that has been absorbed into the physical world, not the opposite. Current visions of the future include computers in our pockets, on our bodies, and under our skin; ubiquitous digital surveillance online and off; smart objects in our work lives and at home. In our emerging digital culture, RFID (radio-frequency identification), QR (quick-response) codes, and URLs are only the most clumsy and obvious ways of weaving the digital into the analog. We are living in an age of augmented reality, not virtual reality.

2 Luciano Floridi, “A Look into the Future Impact of ICT on Our Lives,” *The Information Society* 23, no. 1 (January/February 2007): 61.

Amid this intermeshing of online and offline, “place,” in the sense of fixed, physical geographic locations, continues to be important. When nominating potential candidates, friend-finding algorithms in SNS like Facebook and Google+ consider shared geographies (Where do you live now? Where did you go to school?) as well as shared professional or leisure interests. Our personal and ancestral geographies help us to create and sustain identities, online and off. Recent research on mobile telephony has found that “even as information and communication technologies potentially put the world at our fingertips, the mobile phone is an instrument of a more limited geographical and social sphere. Approximately two-thirds of our calls/texts go to strong ties that are within a 25-km radius.”<sup>3</sup> Physical place continues to condition how we live our lives, and how we imagine our identities.

Community archives are well positioned to benefit from the meeting of imagined and actual place online. People may be drawn to a specific location for any number of reasons: they may have been born there or spent some time there, they may have passed through it on a trip, or they may have ancestors or friends from there. Locality has long been recognized as a key factor in social identity and in archival collecting, particularly for community archives.<sup>4</sup> Understanding how locality, or place, works online is an area of active interest for information professionals, human–computer interaction researchers, and interface designers, all of whom recognize its utility in relation to both online and offline identities and information seeking.<sup>5</sup> “If interaction designers want

- 3 Rich Ling, Johannes Bjelland, Pål Roe Sundsøy, and Scott W. Campbell, “Small Circles: Mobile Telephony and the Cultivation of the Private Sphere,” *The Information Society* 30, no. 4 (August 2014): 282.
- 4 Richard J. Cox, *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists; Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), esp. 1–33. Joanna Newman, “Sustaining Community Archives,” *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services* 25, no. 1 (March 2012): 37–45.
- 5 The literature on online identities, and on space versus place online, is extensive. See, for example, Marilyn Von Seggern, Alex Merrill, and Lihong Zhu, “‘Sense of Place’ in Digital Collections,” *OCLC Systems & Services* 26, no. 4 (January 2010): 273–82; James Steele and Martyn Jolly, “Generating a New Sense of Place in the Age of the Metaview,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 35, no. 4 (December 2011): 461–74; Didem Ozkul, “‘You’re Virtually There’: Mobile Communication Practices, Locational Information Sharing and Place Attachment,” *First Monday* 18, no. 11 (4 November 2013), <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/4950>; John McCarthy and Peter Wright, “Technology in Place: Dialogics of Technology, Place and Self,” in *Human–Computer Interaction – INTERACT 2005, Proceedings of the IFIP TC 13 International Conference, Rome, Italy, 12–16 September 2005*, ed. Maria Francesca Costabile and Fabio Paternò (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2005), 914–26; Jeffrey Pomerantz and Gary Marchionini, “The Digital Library as Place,” *Journal of Documentation* 63, no. 4 (January 2007): 505–33; Kirsty Williamson and Julie Roberts, “Developing and Sustaining a Sense of Place: The Role of Social Information,” *Library & Information Science Research* 32, no. 4 (October 2010): 281–87; José van Dijck, “‘You Have One Identity’: Performing the Self on Facebook and LinkedIn,” *Media, Culture & Society* 35, no. 2 (March 2013): 199–215.

to help people feel in place, they need to engage them at the level of their personhood, not just treat them as anonymous and equivalent units.”<sup>6</sup>

This article examines the ways in which the Deseronto Archives has been able to deploy its collections online via a range of SNS and, in so doing, expand its user base both within its physical reading room and online. The population decline that Deseronto has experienced over the past century means that there are currently more former Deserontonians (and their descendants) living elsewhere than present-day Deserontonians living in the town. As Joan Schwartz and James Ryan have noted, “Photographs [make] the past a palpable part of the present.”<sup>7</sup> Diasporic populations make use of current and historic photographs, and other records, to maintain and extend connections with places they have previously left. SNS like Flickr and Facebook incorporate standard functionalities, such as commenting, tagging, and favouriting, that enable remote SNS users to react to, interact with, and lay claim to records that would otherwise be carefully, but relatively inaccessibly, preserved in archival or museum collections.

We argue that there are good reasons for small community heritage organizations to make use of SNS in meeting their users online. Pointing to the Deseronto Archives as an example, we examine some ways in which community archives can use people’s continuing identification with place, online and offline, as a springboard to social and cultural relevance for the archives, and for the archives to establish new kinds of relationships with new populations of users.

\* \* \*

Deseronto is a small town in Hastings County, in eastern Ontario, with a population of 1,900. Its history is closely bound to that of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and to the Rathbun Company, a major lumber-processing concern whose industries were responsible for the town’s growth in the late nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> The town was the site of two Royal Flying Corps pilot training camps during the First World War.

Photographs and other materials documenting the social, industrial, and military history of the town have been collected by the Deseronto Public Library for many years. In 1997, a bylaw established the Deseronto Archives as a separate entity, with a mandate to collect, preserve, and provide access to

6 McCarthy and Wright, “Technology in Place,” 922.

7 Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, “Introduction: Photography and the Geographical Imagination,” in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, ed. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 5.

8 *Deseronto Archives: News About Deseronto’s Past, as Seen from the Archives* (blog), “Town History,” accessed 30 December 2014, <http://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/town-history/>.

records relating to the Town of Deseronto.<sup>9</sup> The Archives is physically located in the Deseronto Public Library and is currently staffed by a part-time archivist, funded by the town and guided by a supportive board. Amanda Hill, co-author of this paper, took on the role of part-time archivist in 2007. Since that time, she has been conducting an ongoing experiment to provide online access to the materials, with the aim of improving the accessibility of the collections (as the Archives is open to the public for only six hours a week) and raising awareness of them in the local community and in the wider world.

The vision in Deseronto is that the town's Archives should be like its water tower: a reliable, essential, and conspicuous part of the community it serves, delivering its contents whenever they are needed, with the minimum of effort on the part of the end user, wherever he or she might be in the world. The starting point for the experiment was the digitization of the Archives' photographic collection, which had already been catalogued. The Archives has no information technology infrastructure beyond a networked PC, and its total supplies budget is less than \$1,000 a year. In light of these constraints, the decision was taken to use free, commercially provided social networking services, starting with the photo-sharing site Flickr, as the principal means of online public access to the photographs and, eventually, other materials.

Using Flickr in this way is a very affordable option. The basic account is free, and a Pro account costs the Deseronto Archives only \$50 for two years.<sup>10</sup> Uploading photos to the "photostream" is straightforward. Once uploaded, the site's SNS functionalities allow users to annotate, add comments, tag, and share images. Flickr provides good discoverability of the images through its native search function and through external search engines. Flickr also provides the ability to locate images on a map and add information about the date (or approximate date) a photograph was taken. For example, the photo of Mayor Jim Sharpe and Chief Earl Hill (figure 1) is contextualized with a description and date, both input by Amanda Hill. She and anyone else with a Flickr account can add tags, comments, and annotations, and can designate the photo a favourite. Additional metadata, available only to the administrator of the Deseronto Archives' account, includes technical information about the uploading process, as well as additional analytics about various types of user interactions with each photo and with the photostream as a whole. The Flickr interface publicly displays the total number of views for each photo.

9 Corporation of the Town of Deseronto, By-law no. 11-97 (17 November 1997), posted in "About: Deseronto Archives By-law," *Deseronto Archives* (blog), accessed 30 December 2014, <http://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/about/deseronto-archives-by-law/>.

10 In May 2013, Flickr updated its interface and its terms of use for basic and Pro accounts. For an overview of the changes in the Pro account, see Christina Warren, "The New Flickr: What It Means for Flickr Pro Users," *Mashable*, 20 May 2013, <http://mashable.com/2013/05/20/flickr-pro-changes/>.

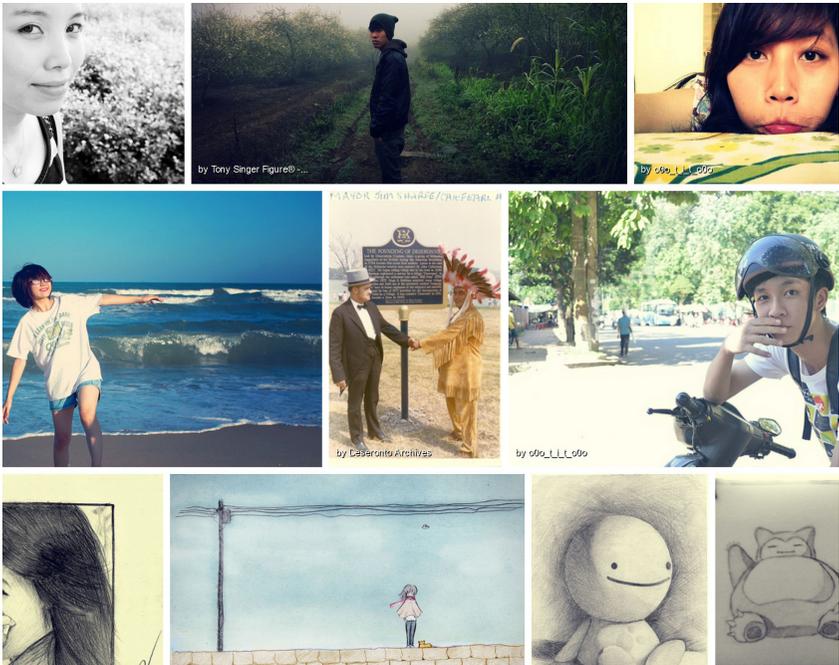


The screenshot shows a Flickr page for a photograph. At the top, the Flickr logo and navigation links (Sign Up, Explore, Create, Upload, Sign In) are visible. The main image is a photograph of Chief Earl Hill in traditional Indigenous regalia shaking hands with Mayor Jim Sharpe in a dark suit. They are standing in front of a historical plaque titled "THE FOUNDING OF DESERONTO". Below the photo are navigation icons and a "Back to photostream" link. The photo's metadata includes the title "Deseronto Archives", the ID "DESHIS-13-03", and a description: "Photograph of Chief Earl Hill and Mayor Jim Sharpe shaking hands, taken in front of the 'Founding of Deseronto' plaque at the Centennial event in Centennial Park, Deseronto, Ontario on June 19th, 1971." It also notes the photographer as Henry Klaver and provides a reference: "88-2A". Engagement statistics show 3,294 views, 10 faves, and 0 comments. A map shows the location in Deseronto, Ontario, Canada. The photo was taken in June 1971 and has no known copyright restrictions.

**Figure 1:** Mayor Jim Sharpe shakes hands with Chief Earl Hill, June 1971. Screen shot captured from Flickr 11 June 2014.<sup>11</sup>

In this case, the photo of Mayor Sharpe and Chief Hill had been viewed 2,528 times as of 11 June 2014. Of those viewers, three left comments (one of them being Amanda Hill, in response to an earlier comment), and two “favoured” the photo. This last action offers some insight into the continuing circulation of the image on Flickr. Photos that are favoured appear on the user’s “favorites” page. Figure 2 shows the Deseronto Archives’ photo amid the jumble of other images favoured by Flickr user Vũ Trần An:

11 Flickr, Deseronto Archives, “Photostream,” DESHIS-13-02, accessed 11 June 2014, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/deserontoarchives/9145129814/>.



**Figure 2:** “Favorites” page of Flickr user Vũ Trần An. Screen shot captured 11 June 2014.<sup>12</sup>

Once a fair number of the Deseronto Archives’ photographs had been made available on Flickr and the usefulness of the approach demonstrated, the town council voted to provide additional funds (\$4,400) to the Archives to complete the digitization and uploading of the remaining images and their descriptions. Consequently, some 1,000 images were put online by 2009. Since then, new accessions (including manuscript and printed materials) have been routinely scanned and shared on Flickr as part of the Archives’ workflow, if they are free from copyright restrictions. At the time of writing, there were over 1,500 images available from the Deseronto Archives’ Flickr account.<sup>13</sup> Photographs that previously could be viewed only on site between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Wednesdays are now visible to Internet users across the world at any time. Taken as a whole, the Deseronto Archives’ photostream has had over one and a half million views on Flickr.

12 Flickr, Vũ Trần An, “Favorites,” accessed 11 June 2014, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/tranan\\_architect/favorites/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/tranan_architect/favorites/).

13 Flickr, Deseronto Archives, accessed 11 June 2014, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/deserontoarchives/collections/>.

Success on Flickr encouraged experiments with other SNS. Deseronto Archives established a WordPress blog in 2007 to share information about its activities and holdings.<sup>14</sup> Having a large proportion of the photographs in digital form makes them easy to include in blog posts. Readers of the blog and viewers of the Flickr images have frequently contributed information about the items featured, helping to improve the Archives' descriptions and management of the items. Documents have been dated, names supplied, and mysteries solved with the help of the wider community. The blog has also been used to share stories about individuals with a Deseronto connection, which have surfaced during the day-to-day work of describing materials and answering queries from the general public.

In a blog post on 12 February 2014, titled "Coming Out of the Woodwork," Amanda Hill noted, "It's surprising just how often people discover items of historical interest in the walls of their properties." She went on to describe a recent find by a Deseronto resident who was renovating her house. The post included digital representations of some of the items discovered, including the photograph in figure 3:



**Figure 3:** Photograph accompanying the blog post "Coming Out of the Woodwork," 12 February 2014.<sup>15</sup>

14 *Deseronto Archives* (blog), accessed 30 December 2014, <https://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/>.

15 Amanda Hill, "Coming Out of the Woodwork," *Deseronto Archives* (blog), 12 February 2014, <http://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/2014/02/12/coming-out-woodwork/>.

Over the course of three days, Hill and blog reader Claudia (Cole) Gendron engaged in a discussion via the blog's comments section (see figure 4). Gendron immediately identified the family in the photograph as her ancestors and named them. She confirmed and extended Hill's attempts to piece together the family history. At the end of their exchange, Gendron, a former Deserontonian, wrote, "When the weather starts to become decent I would like to make trip to Deseronto & visit with you."<sup>16</sup>

In addition to its Flickr photostream and WordPress blog, Deseronto Archives has accounts on Twitter and Facebook. These are used to promote the blog posts, share news, and feature topical Flickr images. Since each of these SNS is part of its own information ecology, each enables different forms of interaction with Deseronto Archives records. A photo that Hill tweeted on 10 June 2014 as part of a Twitter event to mark International Archives Day<sup>17</sup> drew one comment, ten retweets, and seven favourites (see figure 5).

16 Claudia (Cole) Gendron, 15 February 2014 (7:01 p.m.), comment on "Coming Out of the Woodwork," *Deseronto Archives* (blog), <https://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/2014/02/12/coming-out-woodwork/>.

17 Charlotte S. H. Jensen, "Join #WW1archives on June 10, 2014," *#Ask Archivists Initiative* (blog), 2 April 2014, <http://askarchivists.wordpress.com/2014/04/02/join-ww1archives-on-june-10/>.

2. Claudia ( Cole ) Gendron Says:  
 February 12, 2014 at 8:07 pm e  
 These Cole's were my ancestors . I am the granddaughter of Claude Cole . These are very interesting photos . I had 2 scrapbooks re Claude Cole & have put them in Queens Archives for safe keeping & future references if anyone is interested . My father was Wilmot H Cole & Mother was Margaret Mosedale Cole & we lived on Mill Street above the Main Highway until my Mother passed in 1964 . My Father passed in 1941 . I must say I loved growing up in Deseronto . I was 3rd child of same . 1st \_Ronald 2nd\_ Donna 3rd\_ Claudia 4th\_ David . Look forward to additional stories Thankyou

Reply

Amanda Hill Says:  
 February 13, 2014 at 8:00 am e  
 Thanks for commenting, Claudia! That rounds the story off nicely - it looks from the records as though your father, Wilmot, was the only child of Claude and Annie Cole, is that right? Do you know when they moved to Deseronto?

Reply

Claudia ( Cole ) Gendron Says:  
 February 15, 2014 at 2:34 am e  
 no there was another brother Cecil who passed away in 1942 as well . we moved to Deseronto approxamety in 1939 & Gramma Cole ( Annie ) lived with us until she passed in 1946 or 1947 .

3. Claudia ( Cole ) Gendron Says:  
 February 15, 2014 at 2:35 am e  
 sorry Cecil passed in 1941 not 42

Reply

4. Claudia ( Cole ) Gendron Says:  
 February 15, 2014 at 7:01 pm e  
 the 1st photo could be the family of Simon Aylsworth Cole & Sarah Letitia Boulter as they had 5 children 1- Claude Wilmot Cole 2- Mary Edna Cole 3- Aylsworth George Cole 4- Arthur Boulter Cole 5- Jesse A Cole . As we lived at I think 167 mill street . If that is the home being renovated or the one across the street we lived there as well for approx. 1st year or two when we 1st started living in Deseronto . Hope this adds to the story . When the weather starts to become decent I would like to make trip to Deseronto & visit with you . Sincerely Claudia

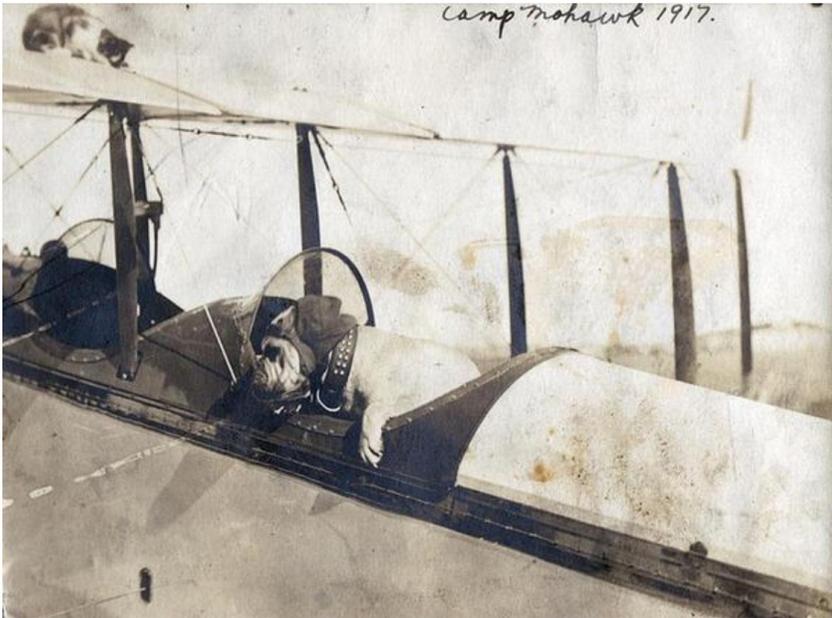
**Figure 4:** Extract from comments on blog post “Coming Out of the Woodwork.” Screen shot captured 11 June 2014.



**Deseronto Archives**  
@DeserontoArch



'John Bull', the mascot of Camp Mohawk, a Royal Flying Corps training camp near Deseronto (plus cat). #WW1archives



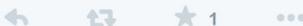
RETWEETS 11 FAVORITES 7



7:14 AM - 10 Jun 2014



**Anna McNally** @annamcnally · Jun 10  
@DeserontoArch a cat AND a dog? you're winning at the internetz.



**Figure 5:** Deseronto Archives tweet from 10 June 2014. Shows the number of times the tweet was retweeted and favourited, as well as the comments. Screen shot captured 11 June 2014.

Through favouriting, embedding, tagging, and commenting, other Flickr, Facebook, and Twitter users can bring Deseronto Archives records into their own information ecologies and into their own social circles and professional networks. Circulating archival records on SNS helps to break down barriers between archivists and users, and between archivists at different institutions, demonstrating the continuing relevance of the archives to these communities and bringing into public view formerly backroom activities like arrangement, description, and reference services.

In some cases, research inquiries themselves are moving into the Archives' public online space. The screen shot in figure 6 shows a series of reference queries posted to the Archives' Facebook page. Similar inquiries have also been posted on the comments area of the blog. These new mechanisms for submitting a question to the Archives open up the opportunity for other visitors to the sites to contribute their own responses to the query.

**Posts To Page** ✕

Robert Burkitt In 1959 my 8th grade class went to visit the St

April 23 at 10:16am

 **Irene Golden** That's probably my tree. I can't confirm that the John Jack in Canada is the same person, but the year of birth is the same as my John Jack and he's the only one I can find in the register for that time in Tarbat. Thanks so much for getting back. Maybe I'll strike lucky. Find your archive info very interesting.

April 23 at 11:04am

 **Ramona Chiasson** ▸ **Deseronto Archives** ▼

March 30 · Terrace Bay · 🌐

I was wondering if anyone can help me.  
My ex-mother in law was born in Kingston. Her mother came from the Tyendinaga Reserve, and was named Marion Violet Green.  
I am trying to find any information on her or her parents, but I have not been able to. Marions mothers name was Violet, although I cannot confirm that at this point.  
I live too far away to do any local research myself and the local library does not do inter-library loans or have a microfilm/fiche reader.  
If anyone has any information, please get in touch with me. Thank you.

Like · Comment · Share · 🗨️ 5

[Top Comments](#) ▾

 **Ramona Chiasson** No. My ex-mil, Carol. Her parents, Kenneth and Marion. It lists Marions age, Kens age, and their address.

March 31 at 5:56am

↳ 4 Replies

 **Ramona Chiasson** I just wanted to update you...I took a closer look through the 1921 Census. It turns out that there are two Marion Greens listed. Second cousins, actually. lol One was born around 1917, the other in 1918.  
I traced their families today and found that t... [See More](#)

March 31 at 2:29pm

 **Deseronto Archives** Excellent news! Thanks for the update Ramona and good luck with your future research.

👍 1 · March 31 at 2:45pm

🗨️ [View 3 more comments](#)

 **Ronda-Lynne Wiesner** ▸ **Deseronto Archives** ▼

February 10 · 🌐

I am looking for information on Deborah Palmer, born 1858. She married David Williams. Children were Melvina, Charles, Flora, Clifford and David. (Flora is my great grandmother). If anyone has information it would be greatly

**Deseronto Archives** shared a link.

**Figure 6:** Public postings to Deseronto Archives' Facebook page. Screen shot captured 25 April 2014.

Sharing collections online has meant that awareness of Deseronto Archives and its holdings has increased both locally and around the world. This has resulted in the donation of new materials – some analog, others digital. Several photograph collections related to the First World War pilot training camps have been donated, many in digital form. The result is that the online resource available through Flickr is larger than the collection that can be physically accessed in the Deseronto Archives. While these digital images lack the materiality of the analog originals held in the Archives, they are richer than the Archives' physical copies in terms of user-generated contextual information such as comments, annotations, and tags.

There are disadvantages in relying on commercial SNS such as Flickr, Twitter, WordPress, and Facebook. Flickr's web interface is occasionally unavailable, and changes in the design of the site are beyond the Archives' control. For example, the major overhaul of the Flickr interface in May 2013 "got rid of navigational chrome, text, links, and metadata throughout."<sup>18</sup> This won accolades for the site from a design perspective – *Wired* magazine opined that the redesign had eliminated "all that icky whitespace and meta-data"<sup>19</sup> – but for archives and other heritage institutions, making descriptive information and metadata harder to find was hardly ideal.

Perhaps even more problematic is the fact that all the information associated with the images, such as comments, tags, and descriptions, is essentially trapped within Flickr. This means that the Deseronto Archives' Flickr photo-stream includes unique, user-generated data that cannot easily be permanently associated with the originals in the Deseronto Archives. Should Yahoo ever decide to shut down Flickr, as it did with the GeoCities web hosting service,<sup>20</sup> or should Deseronto Archives decide to create its own digital storage and access system, it would be difficult to transfer all of this data from Flickr. Indeed, some of the data, including analytics about views, the viewing patterns of users, and the means by which users discovered each photo, cannot effectively be exported from Flickr.<sup>21</sup> The same is true of WordPress, Facebook, and

18 Kyle VanHemert, "The Three Best Features of Flickr's Massive Redesign," *FastCompany Design*, 21 May 2013, <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1672631/the-3-best-features-of-flickr-s-massive-redesign>.

19 Roberto Baldwin, "Flickr Shows New Signs of Life with Slick Redesign," *Wired*, 21 May 2013, <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2013-05/21/flickr-redesign>.

20 Leena Rao, "Yahoo Quietly Pulls the Plug on GeoCities," *TechCrunch*, 23 April 2009, <http://techcrunch.com/2009/04/23/yahoo-quietly-pulls-the-plug-on-geocities/>; Ian Milligan, "Yahoo! Has Probably Destroyed the Most History, Ever – and Historians Need to Wake Up," *Ian Milligan: Digital History, Web Archives, and the History of 20th Century Canada* (blog), 3 April 2013, <http://ianmilligan.ca/2013/04/03/yahoo-sucks-historians-wake-up/>.

21 It is interesting to consider the experience of the Library of Congress (LC) on this point. While staff note that Flickr users have provided "additional and corrected information, including place names, more precise dates, event names and fuller names of individuals," the technical difficulties of bringing this data back to the LC's own catalogue led to the

Twitter. Furthermore, each of these SNS forms its own distinct information silo. The photo discussed above (figure 3), identified by Claudia Gendron on the WordPress blog, was also posted to Flickr, where it attracted no comments but was viewed more than 1,500 times and favourited six times. Flickr viewers might never become aware of the presence of the photo on the blog, or of the discussion between Hill and Gendron, unless they click through the link to the blog post that Hill included in the description. Each of these SNS has integrated the Deseronto Archives' images into its own data set, physically maintained on its own servers, interwoven into its own unique information ecology. In this way, SNS like Flickr take photos from millions of account holders, weave them together with user-generated content like tags and comments, and combine them with proprietary analytics to create a unique data set. It has been argued elsewhere that posting archival records to SNS represents a loss, not in terms of the original record set but in terms of user-generated data and analytics around the subsequent discovery, access, and use of the content.<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, in weighing the options and electing to use these SNS, the Deseronto Archives has realized concrete benefits in terms of the profile of the archives and the circulation of its collections. A Google search for "Deseronto" produces the Deseronto Archives' WordPress blog in the top three hits, after the town's own website and its Wikipedia entry. A Google search for "Deseronto Archives" calls up the Flickr photostream and Twitter account as well as the WordPress blog in the top five hits. The continued and growing support of the Town of Deseronto for the Archives, expressed through ongoing funding and personal interest, demonstrates that this work is valued.

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decision to leave this data in Flickr and to prioritize "the loading of new content [onto Flickr] over updating the master copies of the descriptive records in our own catalog." See Helena Zinkham and Michelle Springer, "Taking Photographs to the People: The Flickr Commons Project and the Library of Congress," *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections Between Archives and Our Users*, ed. Kate Theimer (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011), 102–15. Australia's Powerhouse Museum is one institution that decided to invest in the technical infrastructure needed to transfer user-generated content from Flickr back to its own catalogue. Even in this example, however, the data identified for export from Flickr is limited to descriptive metadata (such as tags and comments) and does not include the much richer – and correspondingly difficult to manage – analytics data that captures users' passive interactions with images posted to Flickr. See Seb Chan, "Re-ingesting Flickr Tags Back from Flickr into Our Collection OPAC," *Fresh and New(er)*, 25 July 2008, <http://www.freshandnew.org/2008/07/re-ingesting-flickr-tags-from-the-commons-back-into-our-collection-opac/>.

- 22 Greg Bak, "Building the Crowd: Archives as Social Networks" (paper presented at *High-Tech Heritage*, Amherst, MA, 4 May 2012); Greg Bak, "Who Owns Your Data? Archives, Web 2.0 and Data Management" (paper presented at Manitoba Libraries Conference, Winnipeg, 16 May 2012).

More important than raising institutional profile, however, has been how the social functionalities of Flickr, WordPress, Twitter, and Facebook have enabled the Deseronto Archives' holdings to be brought into the information ecologies and social circles of Deseronto users. Through the comments on each of these social networking services, Hill has been able to connect with other SNS users and engage in discussions. The Deseronto Archives' accounts on these four SNS effectively function as a virtual reading room, eliminating such barriers as limited hours of operation and travel costs.<sup>23</sup> Hill has noted that the various SNS attract different user groups: Deserontonians past and present are most likely to weigh in on Facebook or the WordPress blog, Twitter tends to attract other information professionals, and Flickr, which has long served as a hub for photographers and others interested in the aesthetics of images, has the most general audience.

Having digital versions of historic photographs on hand has enabled the creation of other resources, online and off. These include a self-guided tour of the town's historic buildings;<sup>24</sup> large panels of photographs for a Doors Open heritage day event; and a "match the caption to the photograph" activity for a visiting class from a local school. In 2012, the Archives became a member of Flickr Commons, which means that all of its images have a "No known copyright restrictions" licence. This allows anyone to make use of the photographs in any way. Local businesses in Deseronto have taken advantage of this licence to print high-quality archival images to decorate their premises. This helps raise general awareness within the local community of aspects of the town's history, even if people do not visit the Archives in person or interact with its online presences. The Flickr images have been included by other people in their online posts, and in magazine articles and published books.<sup>25</sup> They have even been used by a fifteen-year-old former resident of Deseronto who, in an

23 Digital inequalities (e.g., the socio-economic factors in accessing information and communication technologies), as well as limitations in infrastructure (e.g., a lack of broadband access in many rural and northern areas), impose other barriers. Michael Haight, Anabel Quan-Haase, and Bradley A. Corbett, "Revisiting the Digital Divide in Canada: The Impact of Demographic Factors on Access to the Internet, Level of Online Activity, and Social Networking Site Usage," *Information, Communication & Society* 17, no. 4 (April 2014): 503–19.

24 *Town of Deseronto*, "Community/Services: Archives/History," "Deseronto Self-Guided Tour – Notable Buildings of Deseronto, Past and Present" (Town of Deseronto, [2009]), accessed 30 December 2014, <http://deseronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/deseronto-self-guided-tour-notable-buildings.pdf>.

25 See, for example, C.W. Hunt, *Dancing in the Sky* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009); Francis Itani, *Tell* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2014); Brie Dyas, "Ridiculous Etiquette Rules from the '20s Forbid Unauthorized Umbrellas, Friendship," *Huffington Post*, 16 July 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/16/ridiculous-etiquette-rule\\_n\\_3606161.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/16/ridiculous-etiquette-rule_n_3606161.html); Helen Kahlke, "Oh How Times Have Changed," *The Basic Sax Blog*, 3 September 2010, <http://basic-sax.info/blog/?s=times+have+changed&x=0&y=0>; "Amateur Tinting," *The Passion of Former Days* (blog), 18 June 2013, <http://www.formerdays.com/2013/06/amateur-tinting.html>.

ingenious combination of history, creativity, and nostalgia for his hometown, used the collection to create backgrounds for a virtual railway.<sup>26</sup>

Given that Deseronto had 4,000 residents in 1891 and there are only 1,900 today, it is clear that many people with family connections to Deseronto no longer live there. The Archives' Facebook page and WordPress blog, in particular, provide a forum for former residents and descendants of former residents to maintain their connection with and interest in the town. Some have posted their own photographs of Deseronto and its people to the Facebook page, while others have contributed memories in the form of comments on the blog.<sup>27</sup> This demonstrates that, as Terry Cook urged, archivists can successfully "engage interested members of the community in interactive dialogues with mainstream archives and their holdings."<sup>28</sup> Some of the most frequent comments have been from people who no longer live in the area. This reinforces the impression that online spaces foster a sense of community among these distant contributors, allowing for Deseronto dreams among a dispersed diaspora.

In a recent telephone survey, 3,419 Canadians were asked about their attitudes toward the past. A group of leading academics writing under the name The Pasts Collective<sup>29</sup> reported that there is a very high level of interest. More than 85 percent of those surveyed described themselves as "very interested" or "somewhat interested" in the past in general and in Canada's past, while 91 percent were "very interested" or "somewhat interested" in their own family's past.<sup>30</sup>

The uniqueness, and frequently the fragility, of analog archival holdings has resulted in certain default practices at archival facilities, including security precautions, supervised reading rooms, and closed stack storage areas. While these practices help keep materials safe, with the result that archives are frequently identified as trustworthy institutions, they also limit immediate access to holdings, with the result that many people have never set foot in an archives and may not even be aware of them. Research conducted in the UK in 2002–2004 (with over 1,000 people interviewed) ascertained that the general

26 Amanda Hill, "Railways and the Fourth Dimension," *Deseronto Archives* (blog), 24 June 2009, <http://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/2009/06/24/railways-and-the-fourth-dimension/>.

27 David MacKay, 17 March 2014 (3:04 p.m.), comment on "Memories of Deseronto," *Deseronto Archives* (blog), "Town History," <http://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/town-history/memories-of-deseronto/#comment-2588>.

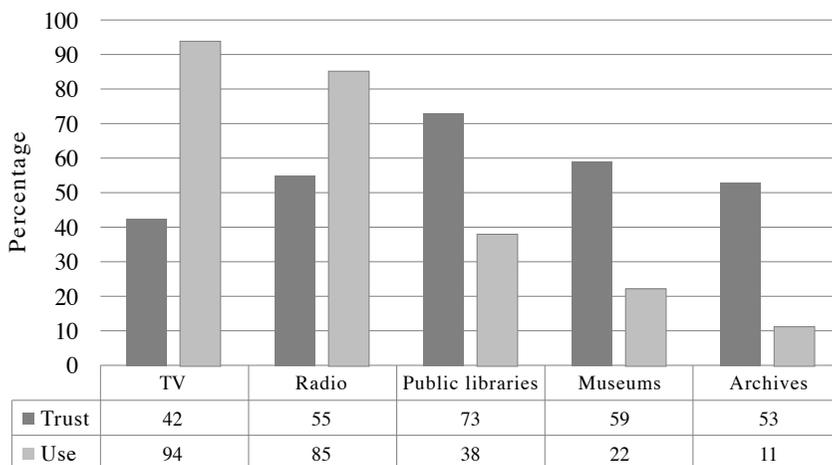
28 Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms," *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2013): 95–120.

29 The members of The Pasts Collective authored *Canadians and Their Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2013). They are Margaret Conrad, Kadriye Ercikan, Gerald Friesen, Jocelyn Létourneau, Delphin Muise, David Northrup, and Peter Seixas.

30 Margaret Conrad et al., "Everybody's Doing It," in *Canadians and Their Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 29–47. Figures are quoted from table 2.2, p. 34.

public has a high level of trust in cultural heritage institutions but a low level of use of them, particularly in the case of archives.<sup>31</sup> Table 1 shows the correlation of public trust versus use as it relates to five different information resources.

**Table 1:** Trust and Use of Information Resources by the UK Public<sup>32</sup>



The same report noted, “The archive service had the most negative response in terms of a lack of understanding about the services on offer and a definitive description of their role and value.”<sup>33</sup> Similar findings are reported in the Canadian survey conducted by The Pasts Collective, though in this case the participants were asked about attitudes toward cultural institutions such as museums and historic sites, not specifically about attitudes toward archives.<sup>34</sup>

Opening up the archives in an online space eliminates barriers to access and exposes interested members of the public to the contents and activities of the institution without forcing them to conform to reading room rules and hours of operation. Making information in archives as readily accessible as information on television and radio, and being explicit about what archivists actually do, are key elements in garnering the support of an audience that *already* demonstrates high levels of trust in our institutions. Trust and

31 Bob Usherwood, Kerry Wilson, and Jared Bryson, “Relevant Repositories of Public Knowledge? Perceptions of Archives, Libraries and Museums in Modern Britain,” The Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, accessed 30 December 2014, [http://www.shef.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.128102!/file/CPLIS--Repositories-of-Public-Knowledge.pdf](http://www.shef.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.128102!/file/CPLIS--Repositories-of-Public-Knowledge.pdf), 25.

32 Ibid., 44, table 3.

33 Ibid., 66.

34 Conrad et al., “The Problem of Trust,” in *Canadians and Their Pasts*, 48–66.

reputation in an online environment are often hard to win, and yet, as Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, tells us, “Trust matters. In the network world, trust is the most important currency.”<sup>35</sup> Cultural heritage institutions are in a strong position before they even start to develop their online social networks. People will like a Facebook page or follow the Twitter account of an institution before it even gets properly established (see table 2 for examples of this), simply because they already have a high level of trust and interest (and perhaps a sense of ownership) in it and its holdings. This gives libraries, archives, museums, and galleries a significant advantage over new commercial enterprises that are setting up social network profiles.

And yet the online environment is only partially being exploited by archives. A comparison of SNS use by provincial and territorial archives in Canada demonstrates a wide variation in practice (see table 2). Few of the archives have their own dedicated accounts or pages, but members of the public are willing to like a Facebook page for an archives even when it comprises only automatically populated information from Wikipedia and has not been updated by the institution itself. This is a missed opportunity for engagement with an enthusiastic potential audience.

35 Eric E. Schmidt, “The Courage to Be Unreasonable” (commencement address given at Pennsylvania State University, 2009), accessed 30 December 2014, <http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v55/n34/comm-schmidt.html>.

**Table 2:** Comparison of SNS use by provincial and territorial archives in Canada.<sup>36</sup>

<b>Province or Territory</b>	<b>Facebook Page Likes</b>	<b>Twitter Account Followers</b>
Alberta	No official page (47 likes on automatically generated page)	4,500 (@AlbertaCulture)
British Columbia	14,400 (Royal BC Museum page)	13,000 (@RoyalBCMuseum)
Manitoba	No official page (35 likes on automatically generated page)	318 (@MBGovArchives)
New Brunswick	No official page (44 likes on automatically generated page)	No account
Newfoundland and Labrador	3,421 (The Rooms page)	315 (@TheRooms)
Northwest Territories	1,414 (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre page)	No account
Nova Scotia	5,344	12,200 (@NS_Archives)
Nunavut	No page	No account
Ontario	No official page (154 likes on automatically generated page)	3,224 (@ArchivesOntario)
Prince Edward Island	No page	No account
Quebec	15,053 (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec page)	292 (@_BAnQ)
Saskatchewan	No official page (18 likes on automatically generated page)	No account
Yukon	No page	1,080 (@insideyukon)

Sociologists talk about interpersonal relationships in terms of strong and weak ties.<sup>37</sup> Strong ties are those we form with our immediate, physical, social network (those who are likely to know the same people we do), while weak ties are links with more casual acquaintances (who have a completely different network of strong ties). Communications theorists have extended the use of strong and weak ties to SNS.<sup>38</sup> By establishing a presence in the form of a

36 Details correct as of 18 September 2014.

37 Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (May 1973): 1360–80.

38 Caroline Haythornthwaite, "Strong, Weak, and Latent Ties and the Impact of New Media," *The Information Society* 18, no. 5 (October 2002): 385–401.

weak tie within an individual's online network, archives can embed themselves as part of that person's social world and form a connection equivalent to that of a casual acquaintance. Such a relationship is difficult for a bricks-and-mortar institution to achieve however good the rapport between individual staff and visitors may be. SNS make it easier to establish, maintain, and extend the kinds of relationships that archival staff have traditionally built with users through one-on-one interactions in the reading room, on the telephone, and by mail. The significant difference is that many of the people now being reached through these tools would not have had a relationship of any kind with an archives before and may well have been unaware of their existence, services, and role.

In the context of activism, Maria Popova notes that weak ties such as those formed in SNS are an important starting point for raising levels of interest: "Access is the first tile in a domino effect of awareness, empathy and action. The power of the social web lies in the sequence of its three capacities: To inform, to inspire and to incite."<sup>39</sup> By providing online access to archives and archivists as nodes in people's social networks, we are capable of generating awareness and understanding of our activities and holdings. This may lead to empathy for the goals of the institution and for the people whose stories are represented in our records. It can also, as we will see, result in offers of action in times when the future of the institution is perceived as being at risk.

The Canadian archival profession has been on a roller coaster for the past few years. In 2012, it started a free-fall plunge when Library and Archives Canada, in response to draconian cuts from the federal government, eliminated the National Archival Development Program (NADP). In addition to expressing dismay through online discussions, letters to editors, and letters to cabinet ministers and members of Parliament, archivists and friends of archives began to organize. In 2013, the Royal Society of Canada conducted national consultations on the status and future of Canadian libraries and archives.<sup>40</sup> In January 2014, the Association of Canadian Archivists, in conjunction with other archival organizations, held the Canadian Archives Summit.<sup>41</sup> These events brought us together, made us think about the fragility of our current archival system, and gave us space in which to imagine the archival system we want and need. We now have the Royal Society's report as well as several reflections on the Canadian Archives Summit. We are still thinking about how to build on the insights and the energy that came out of

39 Maria Popova, "Malcolm Gladwell Is #Wrong," *The Design Observer Group* (blog), 10 June 2010, <http://changeobserver.designobserver.com/feature/malcolm-gladwell-is-wrong/19008/>.

40 Royal Society of Canada, *The Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory*, (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 2014), <http://www.rsc.ca/en/expert-panels/rsc-reports/future-now-canadas-libraries-archives-and-public-memory>.

41 Association of Canadian Archivists, "Advocacy," Canadian Archives Summit, accessed 30 December 2014, <http://archivists.ca/content/canadian-archives-summit>.



**Robert Burkitt** ▸ **Deseronto Archives** 12 May 2012 · 🌐

What is going to happen to Deseronto Archives now? I had many happy years in Deseronto, and have reacquainted myself with old friends as well as meet new friends with a common interest. I think all of the current 150 names ought to know.

Like · Comment

👍 **Robert Burkitt** likes this.

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**David Neal** Heads together time! 12 May 2012 at 20:10 · Like

**Robert Burkitt** I am 600 miles away, and a citizen of a different country (USA). I don't have an MP! Does anyone have any ideas on people like myself who care. Those living in Canada should write their MP's and give him an alternative: Canada's history or his or her job. I signed a petition when it first came out about the abolition of the this bill, and I am willing to do it again. Somebody close to the situation should form a committee to reinstate this bill. Is there anybody interested? Even 600 miles, I'd be more than glad to participate somehow. In fact, all friends of Deseronto Archives should participate, and their friends, and their friend's friends!!! Please keep in touch. 12 May 2012 at 20:30 · Like

**Linda Kimmitt** Why what is going on??? I live 7 miles away and haven't heard anything??? 12 May 2012 at 20:32 · Like

**Robert Burkitt** Linda, read all the comments on the National Archival Development Program being axed. This means that throughout Canada all such development are on hold. This affects funding, I would think, big-time, and for our interests, funding for Deseronto's program. 12 May 2012 at 20:37 · Like

**David Neal** Perhaps one of the first things that might be done is to ask the present archivist what she thinks. She's our 'boots on the ground', so to speak. 13 May 2012 at 06:02 · Like

**Deseronto Archives** Hi everyone - thanks for your concern. The Archives main funding is from the Town of Deseronto, which is still in place. What this program offers is additional funding for special projects for archives all over Canada. It's the only federal money that archives can apply for. It also supports the work of archives advisors in each province/territory. The work of these advisors is particularly important for small archives who may not have professionally-trained staff or expertise in particular areas of archives work. Without the NADP money, those advisory jobs have been suspended in 11 out of the 13 provinces. So although the Archives in Deseronto will still be there, the support outside of Deseronto won't be, nor will there be any federal funding for special projects we might want to do. Signing the petition ([chn.ge/JeNwNr](http://chn.ge/JeNwNr)) will help and writing to the Canadian Heritage Minister, James Moore is another option (<http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch/minstr/moore/cntct/index-eng.cfm>). Thanks again!! 13 May 2012 at 06:58 · Like

**Figure 7:** Discussion on Facebook about the potential impact of NADP cuts on Deseronto Archives. Screen shot captured 2 July 2014.

the Canadian Archives Summit. But one thing is clear: we urgently need what Tom Nesmith, in a Thought Leader paper he wrote for the summit, calls “a renewed, strengthened alliance of archivists and users of archives.” Such an alliance is our best hope of demonstrating the ongoing relevance of archives to Canadian society, and to our local communities. This alliance, Tom suggests, would “give users of archives a greater role as advocates for archives.”<sup>42</sup> Social networking services offer archives a space in which we can get to know our current users and attract new ones, and to work toward building the alliance that Nesmith describes.

When Amanda Hill posted on Facebook about the elimination of NADP funding in May 2012, a number of Facebook followers wrote questions about what this meant for the future of Deseronto Archives and how they could help. The Archives’ core funding from the Town of Deseronto was not affected by the NADP’s cancellation, but the supportive reaction of the Facebook community that had formed around the Archives’ account was encouraging. It suggests that building an online community like this is an important step in creating a source of support for a service in case of future threats.

Social networking theorists have explored the importance of both strong and weak ties for personal identities, and for feelings of inclusion within networks, whether those networks are online or offline.<sup>43</sup> Through SNS like Facebook, Deseronto Archives makes itself available as a “weak tie” partner. While this is beneficial for the Archives in moments of crisis, such as the cancellation of the NADP, it should not be forgotten that such weak social ties are also beneficial for individual SNS users who may view their relationship with Deseronto, and the history of Deseronto, as an important part of their identity.

Within the literature on social media, the process of drawing together an online community is sometimes referred to as “building the crowd.” Building the Deseronto Archives’ crowd has involved using SNS to attract users who have diverse interests and who reside in a number of physical locations. There are several ways that individuals can demonstrate a relationship with Deseronto Archives through SNS such as Flickr or Facebook. Commenting, annotating, tagging, and favouriting individual posts and photographs are some of the methods; “liking” and subscribing to an institutional account are others; joining groups is yet another. Through these affiliations, cultural institutions build their crowds. From the perspective of the SNS user, however, such actions and affiliations allow the conscious construction of an online identity.

42 Tom Nesmith, “The Missing Piece: Towards New Partnerships with Users of Archives,” Association of Canadian Archivists, “Advocacy,” Canadian Archives Summit, Resources, accessed 3 January 2015, [http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Advocacy\\_attachments/nesmith\\_the\\_missing\\_piece\\_towards\\_new\\_partnerships\\_with\\_users\\_of\\_archives.pdf](http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Advocacy_attachments/nesmith_the_missing_piece_towards_new_partnerships_with_users_of_archives.pdf).

43 Haythornwaite, “Strong, Weak and Latent Ties,” 386–88; Ling et al., “Small Circles,” 283.

Research on Facebook identities by Kristy Young, for example, suggests, “The primary purpose for joining a group was to let the online world know that you are interested.”<sup>44</sup> Earlier studies of online identity tended to focus on the licence this provides for creating an idealized, or even wholly fictional, version of the self. Young, however, observes that

the merging of offline and online worlds results in an audience (i.e., Facebook friend network) that requires the self to be presented in an authentic way. Although there is some scope to present an idealised self ... there was little evidence in this study, and in the research of others, that an idealised self is portrayed at the expense of the real ... This is particularly due to the offline encounters between online friends and the written feedback provided on Facebook profiles (e.g., comments on pictures and status updates).<sup>45</sup>

From this perspective, archival records on SNS, in addition to archival institutional profiles, channels, and photostreams, are part of the material available to SNS users as they go about the construction of an online identity. Whereas archival research used to be an almost entirely solitary activity, observable only by other researchers and the reading room attendant, now users of SNS can proudly display their interest in the past as one more dimension of their personality. For some people, a weak tie with Deseronto Archives, developed through an online affiliation on an SNS, may reinforce other aspects of their online identities, such as an interest in local history, Canadian aviation history, or community archives. For others, affiliation with Deseronto Archives may be sheer quirk, an interesting wrinkle that does not particularly align with their other interests but adds to the texture and depth of their online identity. Earlier in this paper, we cited one such example: the incongruity of a Deseronto Archives photo jumbled among the favourites of Flickr user Vũ Trần An (see figure 2).

Maintaining SNS is not a cost-free option, of course, and it takes time to establish relationships, both online and off. The network established by Deseronto Archives has been seven years in the making. This is not work that can be undertaken overnight, or by temporarily funded staff. To take full advantage of the potential benefits of SNS, cultural heritage institutions need sustainable financial support and a commitment to community engagement that spans several years, rather than weeks or months.

While making the most of its online presence is a key step, the Deseronto Archives also recognizes the importance of involvement in community activities in the physical world. The Hastings County Cultural Plan of 2012 states:

44 Kirsty Young, “Managing Online Identity and Diverse Social Networks on Facebook,” *Webology* 10, no. 2 (December 2013): 10.

45 *Ibid.*, 12.

Cultural heritage is a critical ingredient in enriching the quality of place in communities that attracts people and investment. A community or a region's heritage contributes to defining the unique identity of a community or region that is a major factor in attracting tourists.<sup>46</sup>

The authors of the plan note that

stakeholders repeatedly stated that it was imperative to “bring our history to life” – make it accessible to our visitors and local residents. It was also felt that it was very important to maintain and support archives.<sup>47</sup>

Cultural heritage tourism is recognized in the region and in the town as an important element of economic development. Future plans for the Archives include bringing archival materials onto the streets of Deseronto in the form of interpretative displays that will explain aspects of the town's history to both tourists and residents. Establishing the Archives as a key part of the community in its online form has been an important step in raising awareness and gathering support within the town for the promotion of its history in the local landscape.

\* \* \*

Making archival records available on SNS can offer a boost to the institutional profile of an archive. In the case of the Deseronto Archives, this boost has resulted in continuing financial support in the real world – no small feat when the “real world” in question is that of financial scarcity in a small Ontario town.

Additionally, by participating in SNS the Deseronto Archives has made its records available in a new social context for a new use: the construction of hybrid online/offline identity. The liking, sharing, favouriting, and annotation of online photographs is part of the current milieu in which local historical study is conducted, but it is also how SNS users create online identities and signal their interest in broader issues of history, culture, and heritage. Archives that build a crowd of followers through SNS have the potential of leveraging these relationships when faced with a real crisis, such as the elimination of the NADP funding in 2012.

46 Millier Dickenson Blais, “Business: Economic Development,” Hastings County & Quinte Region 10-Year Cultural Plan, “Creativity + Prosperity + Community: A 10 Year Cultural Plan for Hastings County + Quinte Region,” accessed 30 December 2014, <http://www.hastingscounty.com/business/economic-development>.

47 Millier Dickenson Blais, “A Cultural Plan for Hastings County and the Quinte Region: Key Findings and Strategic Directions Report” (June 2012), <http://www.hastingsculturalplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Hastings-Key-Findings-and-Strategic-Directions-Report-June-25-2012.pdf>.

It is worth noting that it is not only SNS users who consciously create hybrid online/offline identities. Through its Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, and WordPress accounts, the Deseronto Archives is creating its own hybrid online/offline identity, one in which it fulfills its traditional role by physically preserving the history of Deseronto, even while it asserts a social role by bringing archives to the people and engaging with its users online. Implicit to this engagement, moreover, is the notion that the Deseronto Archives is technologically competent and up to date. In endorsing this work, the Town of Deseronto, too, is constructing a hybrid online/offline identity, one in which it demonstrates its commitment to heritage and culture through its support of the archives, online and off.

In this sense, the Deseronto Archives is just another SNS user, going about the work of creating an online identity that is anchored by place but flourishing online. Though its analog collecting policy remains closely tied to the Town of Deseronto, it has opened its photographs to vast new populations, including former Deserontonians (and their friends and descendants), other community archives and archivists, people with an interest in old photographs for their aesthetics, humour, and style, people with an interest in the history of small-town Ontario in general, and so on. On the Internet, anyone can have Deseronto dreams. The Deseronto Archives' presence on SNS allows other SNS users to weave those dreams into the hybrid online/offline world of contemporary digital culture.

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