We'll Get There Together:

Launching Collections into the Future with Arca, BC's Collaborative Digital Repository

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Gulf of Georgia Cannery

- Thanks so much for coming to this session at the end of such a great conference!
- Over the past 2 days we've been hearing about forward-thinking ways to evolve our libraries as we continue to serve our communities and design our future
- We really feel that collaboration is and will continue to be critical to the evolution of libraries, to our ability to scale our capacity to provide services and to innovate.
- We're here today to talk about an example of a collaborative service, a transformative tool, that is allowing even the smallest libraries, museums, archives and galleries to innovate and evolve their services, launching them into the future

- ○ Arca is just one of a suite of tools supported and coordinated by the BC Electronic Library Network, BC's consortium of post-secondary libraries, many of you will be familiar with OutLook OnLine, our provincial interlibrary loan management tool
- ○ These services are all examples of applied systems-thinking at the provincial level, and they emerged out of a desire to find ways to share infrastructure and costs to create equity across the province, so that even smallest sites can offer the same services as larger ones

Arca is…

- BC's award-winning collaborative Islandora digital repository
- a robust, standards-based provincial service initiated with Ministry seed funding
- sustained by participants
- currently used by 18 post-secondary libraries & 26 GLAM organizations

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○ It is a shared instance of the open source Islandora digital repository software, which was chosen primarily for its ability to support a multi-site architecture so that a single investment in centralised infrastructure could be leveraged across many sites

○ Impetus came from library directors who were feeling pressure to provide some kind of repository for their organisations, but could not support a stand alone repository

○ Service was initiated with seed funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, but now fully self-supported by its participants

○ Islandora is Canadian-developed open-source software, our instance is hosted at SFU cloud hosting, and our instance is managed by discoverygarden, a PEI-based service provider

○ The model has been so successful that we're expanding it across the GLAM sector

○ currently used by 18 post-secondary libraries and 26 GLAM organisations

Arca is supported!

Participants receive friendly frontline support for implementation, metadata wrangling, configuration, training & maintenance.

Admin Centre liaises and negotiates with SFU cloud host and *discoverygarden* service provider

The Arca Admin Centre provides province-wide coordination and support

- One key to its success is the centralised support
- Arca Admin Centre sits at BC ELN and provides frontline support to all participants, as well as training, metadata wrangling, implementation support, maintenance, liaison with hosting, and service providers
- makes it possible to provide varying levels of support, depending on the needs of the organisation

https://arcabc.ca

- Go to Arcabc.ca you'll see this
- This is the top level site that allows you to search across all the Arca collections from all organisations
- Arca is search engine optimised, aggregating impact, encouraging browsing

- ○ Search across all Arca collections e.g Nisga'a
- ○ Results include images of a bentwood box from Coast Mountain College, theses from UNBC, provincial report from JIBC, and a student newspaper from Douglas College

- ○ Each participant can have their own child site e.g. UNBC Northern BC Collection
- ○ Customised branding, map browse interface
- ○ Arca is fundamentally a content management system that creates Persistent Identifiers for each object, so you can link to your Arca objects from anywhere, you can feed the metadata into others library systems e.g. UNBC Arca objects are searchable in their Summon discovery layer
- ○ Can include many different types of materials, books, maps, photographs, newspapers, audio, video, as well as author or scholar profiles

https://bchdp.arcabc.ca
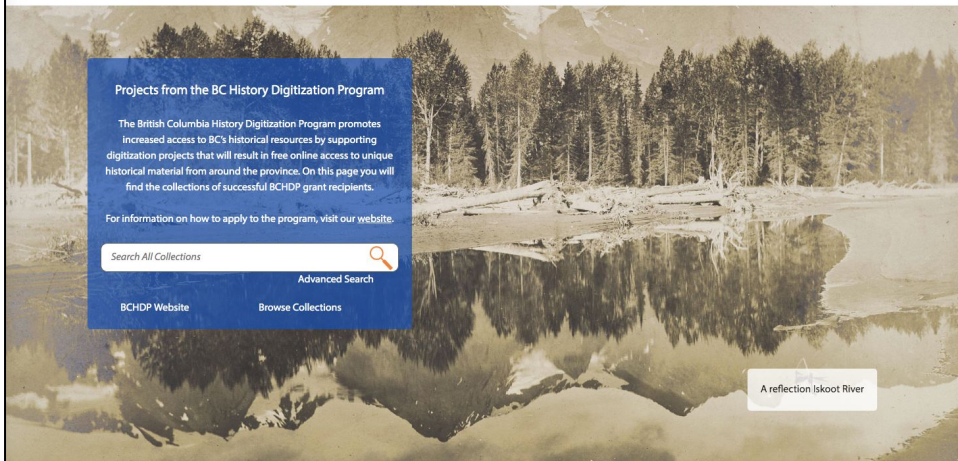
- ○ Flexible architecture of the Islandora platform allows us to partner with other organisations to create aggregator hubs
- ○ An example is the BC History Digitization Program - we're partnering with them to provide an option for grant recipients who don't have a place to make their digitised materials accessible.
- ○ BCHDP currently has sub-collections from Barkerville, Terrace Public Library, and the Northern Pacific Cannery, which Heidi will be speaking about soon
- ○ Will soon include others like the grunt gallery and the Nikkei Centre
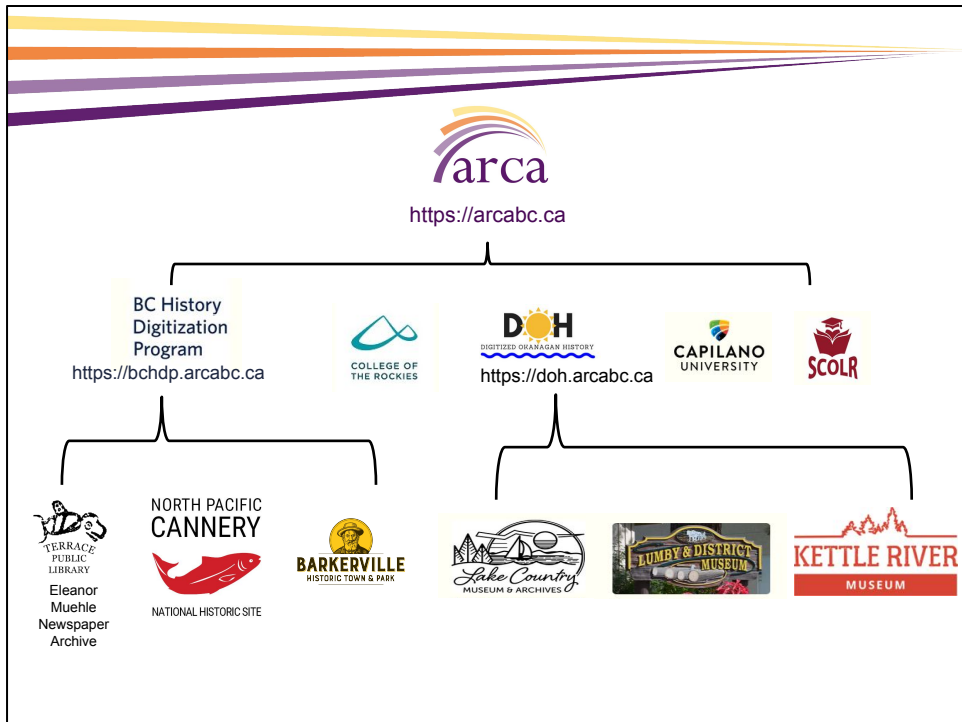
- ○ Flexible architecture of Islandora allows us to have both stand alone child sites such as College of the Rockies and CapU, but also content hubs like the BC History Digitaization program and Digitised Okanagan History, which Paige will be talking about next
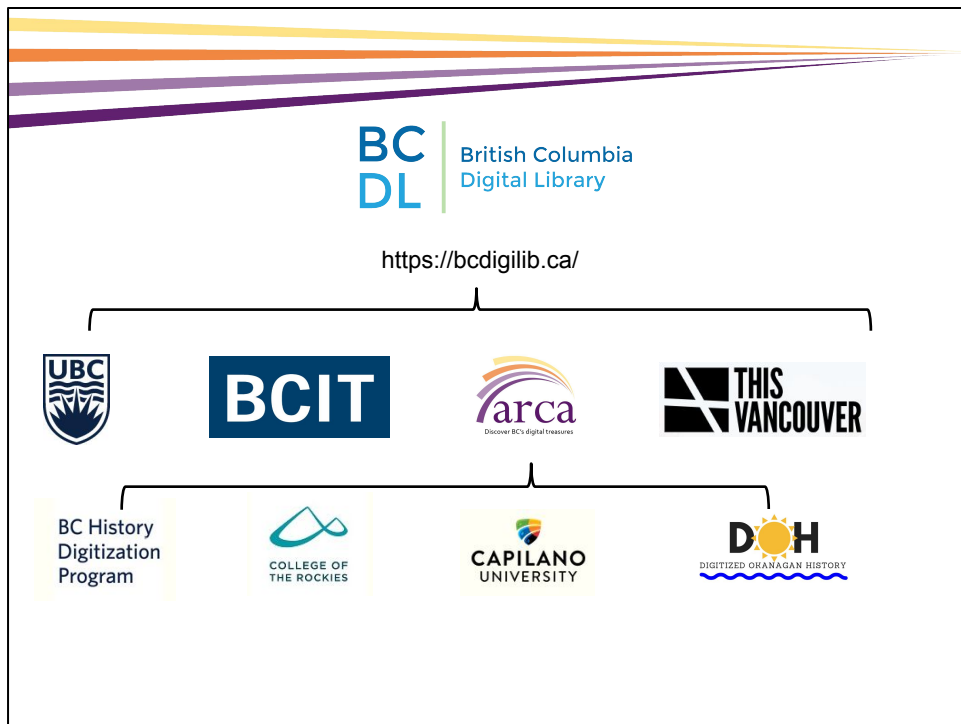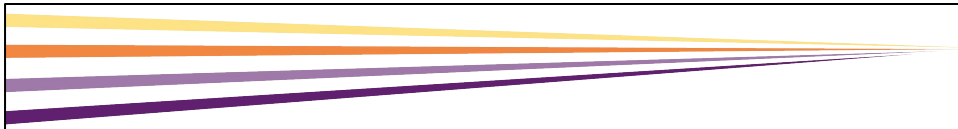
- ○ Arca is foundational to the vision for DigitalBC (formerly known as the BC Digital Library), proposed as a single search where Arca content appears along with content from other repositories in the province like UBC's Open Collections, Vancouver Public Library's This Vancouver, and others

Hub & Spoke Model

- The hub & spoke model connects different organisations, in varying sizes and complexities, in a distributed network of content and service providers.
- Systems approach to eliminate duplication of effort, and reduce organisation and system costs

○ The DigitalBC is envisioned as a hub and spoke model, where different organisations of varying sizes and complexities operate in a distributed network of content aggregators and centralised service providers

○ Our panel represents organisations at different levels of this hub and spoke network; Paige will speak about Digitised Okanagan History as an aggregator, and Heidi will speak from the perspective of a small organisation 'on the ground'

- Nested collaboration within Arca
- Regionally focussed
- Capacity-extending
- Strengths-based

[Thanks to Sunni]

My portion of this panel will describe how Digitized Okanagan History, one of the partners under the Arca banner, has leveraged and extended Arca's 'hub-and-spoke' structure with a centralized resource allocation model to support small community museums and archives in publishing their historical materials online in a regionally-focused digital platform.

In my role as coordinator for DOH, with Chris Hives, UBC University Archivist, who began this as a sabbatical project in 2016 I see myself in a 'sub-aggregator' role, where our partnership model is micro-expression of the larger Arca structure

Participating in Arca has had a Transformative impact - we have been able to bridge gaps for organizations that could not carry Arca membership solo, and provide support in terms of time & labour, professional expertise, and some assistance with the technical aspect and seen a significant and rapid output of content.

60 sec

Objectives & Outcomes

Enhance Access

to unique, local historical resources to support all forms of research

Build Infrastructure and Capacity

to allow small community memory institutions to participate in an inter-institutional, regional project

68,000 items

23 partners
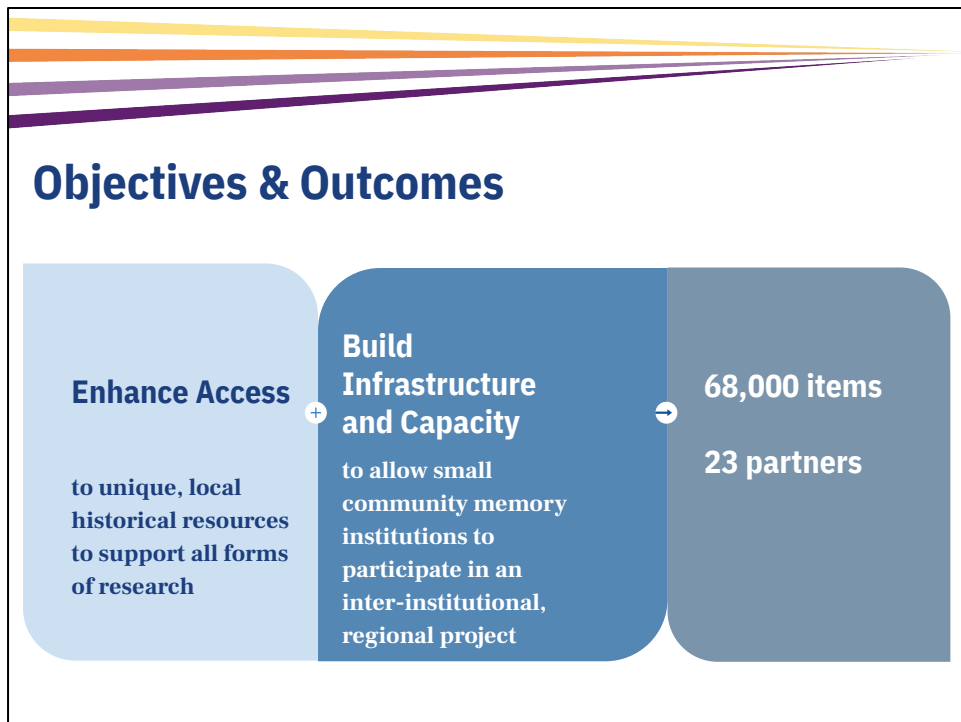
What is DOH, and what are we trying to do?

The Digitized Okanagan History (D.O.H.) project addresses two objectives. First, it aims to make relatively unknown, or under-utilized historical material more broadly accessible to support all levels of research. Second, it aims to build, customize, and sustain the procedural infrastructure to allow small community memory institutions to participate in a multi-institution collaboration which would otherwise be out of reach. This procedural infrastructure is enacted technologically by Arca. The D.O.H. repository has now grown to over 68,000 digital items drawn from some twenty-three partner organizations located in

40 sec
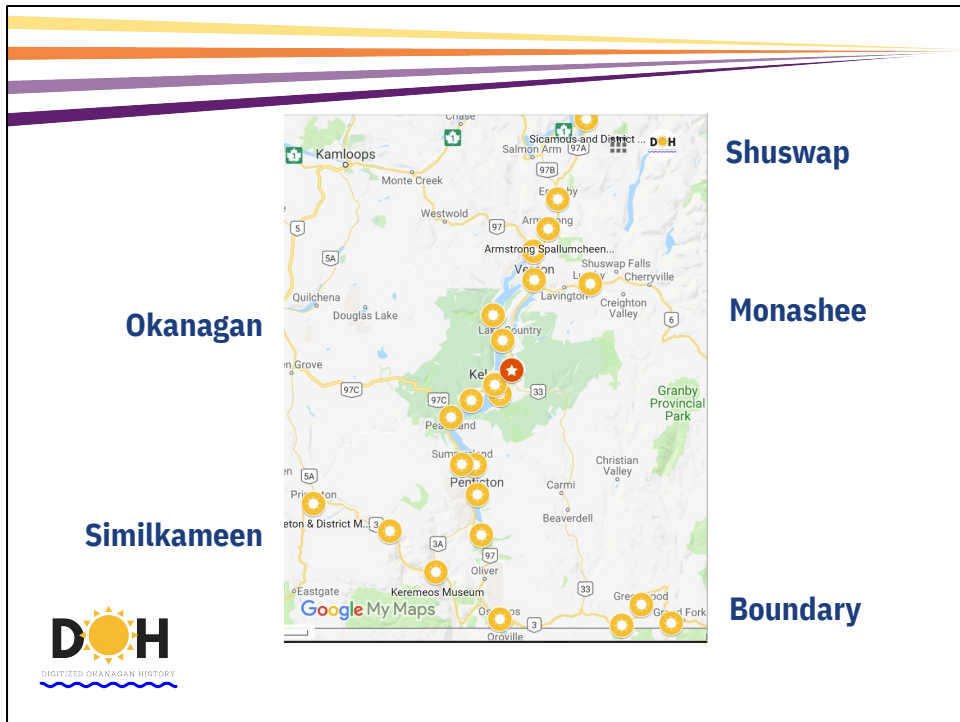
Where do we operate?

240km N-S
160km E-W

Okanagan, Shuswap, Similkameen and Boundary regions of B.C.'s interior spanning a catchment area from Osoyoos in the south to Sicamous in the north and from Princeton in the west to Grand Forks in the east.

25 sec

152,000*

*Photographs only
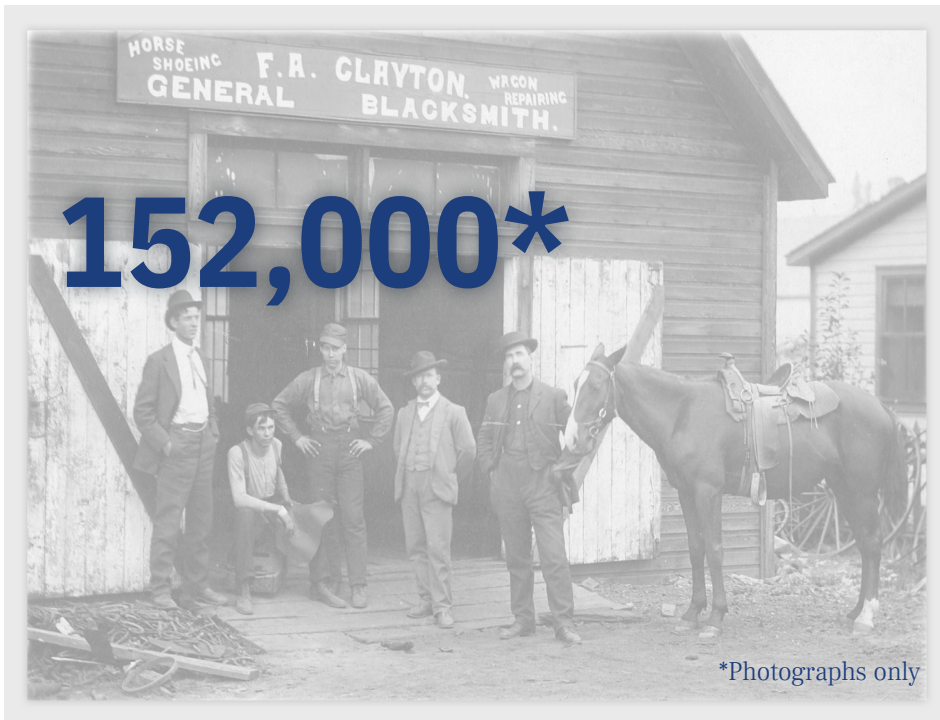
How do we know it's worthwhile?

We started with a needs assessment and feasibility study at the outset delivered by telephone to a preliminary list of twenty-two potential project partners. In aggregate, and based on repositories' own estimates, at least 150,000 historical photographs resided in community archives in the Okanagan region alone; this is excluding pages of text, newspapers, or audio visual holdings as well as photographs in the Similkameen and Boundary.

40 sec

Estimated total photos v. already digitized photos
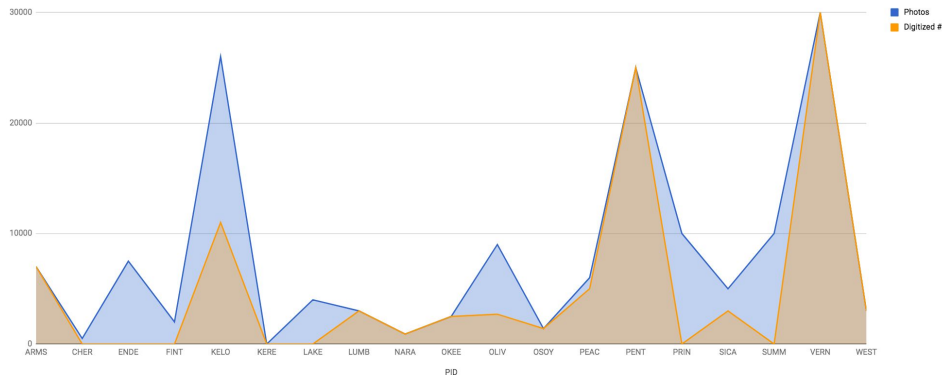
What did the survey tell us?

The survey compiled information about interest in participating in the project and gathered data about holdings and identified what, if any, digitized copies of material already existed.

The answers we collected indicated that at least 60% of these photographs already existed in digitized form.

This told us that the main barrier to repositories making their materials available online wasn't in the digital conversion -- that was an area in which they exhibited strength - but rather in the representation of these digitized images in a structured, sustainable, and searchable interface.

Additionally, The survey revealed strong support for the initiative, with repeated emphasis on a positive expectation for this project to address problems related to technology and manpower, as well as release certain types of "embedded" information previously kept in the collective memory banks of aging museum volunteers. In several measures, then, this project held the promise of servicing the existing priorities of community repositories, and in providing risk mitigation to participants.

65 seconds
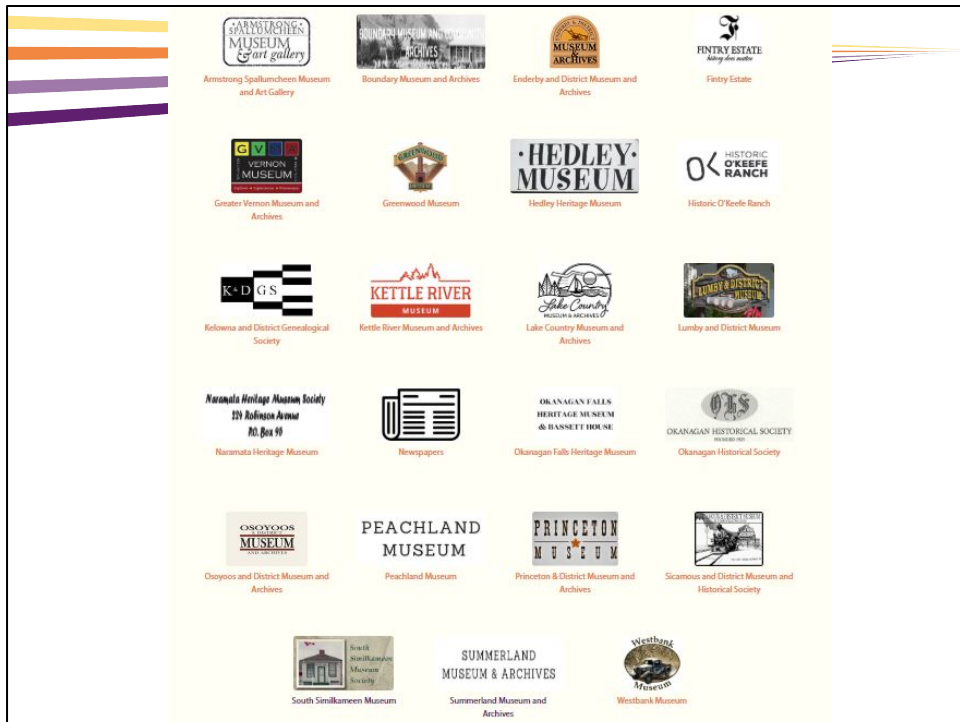
The outcome. 23 partners, which includes 2 non-collecting societies (OHS, KDGS), and 21 organizations with a heritage mandate.

15 sec

Emma Smith and Eamon Riordan-Short, Peachland Museum, 2017

Alex Neijens and Eamon Riordan-Short, O'Keefe Historic Ranch, 2017

Alex Neijens, Osoyoos & District Museum & Archives, 2017

Sharon Hanna, Sicamous & District Museum, 2018

Rhiannon Wallace, Peachland Museum, 2019

Partner interactions supported many of our intuitions about the challenges faced by local memory institutions. Recognizing these challenges –lack of money, lack of technical expertise, lack of time and space, inconsistent description, difficulty engaging with the public, difficulty producing metrics - helped inform the development of the project. Identifying these significant challenges resulted in prioritizing the reduction of real and perceived barriers to as close to zero as possible to reduce load on our partners, and to adopt a radically service-oriented approach to this project.

Consequently, we began with itinerant model, with a student teams travelling to partner repositories beginning in May 2017, where work took place in situ using mobile digitization equipment. Subsequently we moved a lot of the work in house to realize efficiencies, but the primary condition of meeting partners where they were was indispensable to building trust and a sense of 'togetherness' which still steers the project.
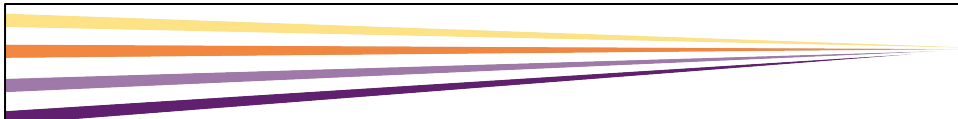
55 seconds
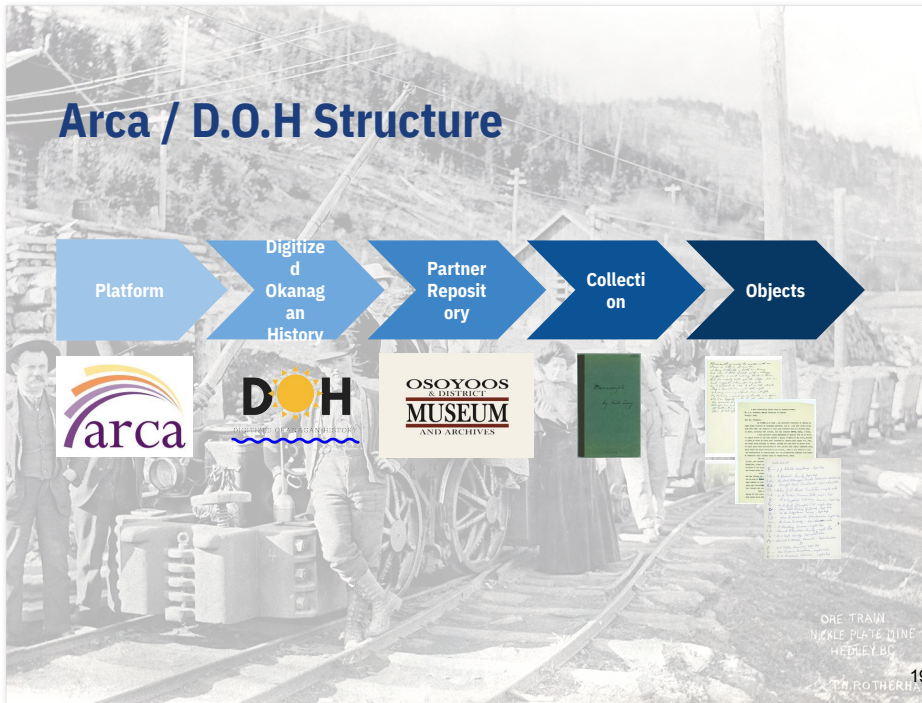
The project chose Arca to be the home for DOH.Islandora architecture draws strength from its capacity to enact nested hierarchical arrangement structures inherent in archival collections. This recursion extends upward as well, with D.O.H. itself representing one among many institutional partners under the Arca banner. This support an active community of practice with knowledge exchange and reciprocal sharing of tools and strategies, both of which have enhanced our own capacity to provide efficient and comprehensive service to our partners.

Arca's deliberate development as an aggregation of diverse institutional repositories, supported by intentional, collaborative development of community standards helps to ensure the sustainability of current and future digitization projects.

50 seconds

DOH Content

- 12,000 photographs
- Approximately 100 collections, fonds, or albums
- 80 maps
- Growing collection of oral histories
- The Prospector
- KDGS Reports
- OHS Reports
- Mining, agriculture, schools

As of March of 2019, the project had compiled some 680 book objects, nearly 35,000 photographs (approximately half of which have been uploaded), 80 maps, 1,500 newspaper issues and nearly 200 audio recordings (also only partially uploaded).

Of these represented as book objects, approximately 120 are actual published materials of historical significance, including all available reports of the Okanagan Historical Society as well as regional cemetery reports for the Kelowna and District Genealogical Society, with the balance representing folders of loose leaf text comprising over 100 archival fonds, collections, or compiled albums.

Photographic coverage dates from 1869 with geographical coverage largely dependent on the volume of photographs available for contribution from each respective repository, but subjects across all collections focus on mining, agriculture, forestry, and city- and landscapes, as well as portraiture. Archival fonds revolve around the documentation of societies, prominent families, assessment and land rolls, civic minutes, school records.

An inevitable benefit of expanding archival space into a web environment and relieving dependence on single-point, place-based research visits is that inks across space can be reified in dynamic (and constantly deepening) lists of

search results, illustrating past and present intra- and inter-regional interdependencies and shared histories.

80 seconds
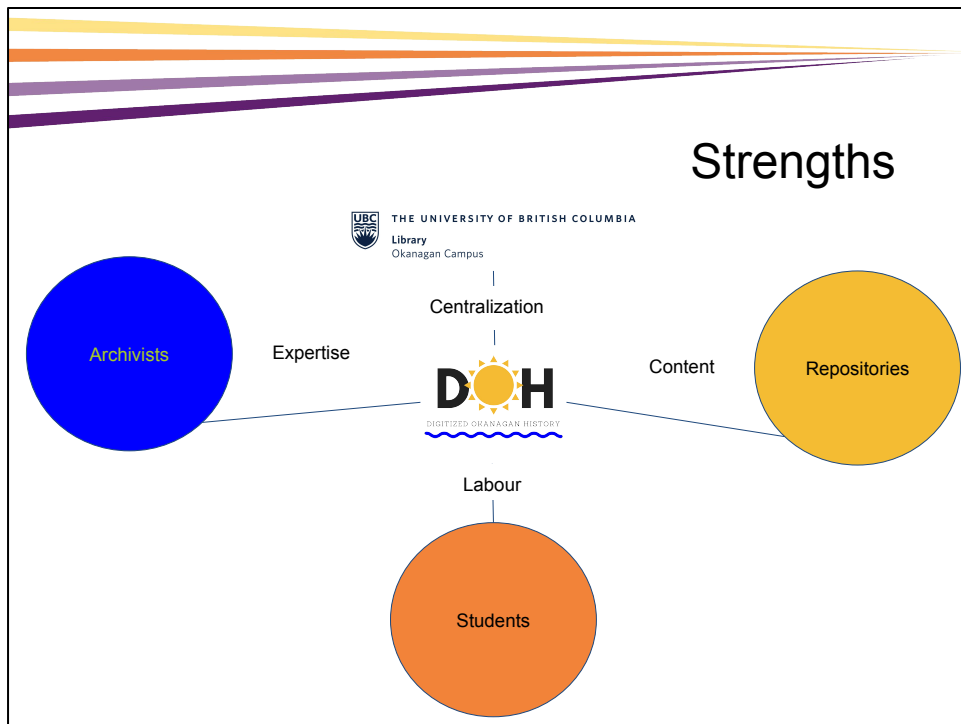
A four-part approach/model:

1) repositories (provide the material and passion for community history and documentation). In many ways, this is the resolution to work that has already been underway for years, with collection, arrangement, description

2) archivists (have the knowledge of best practice)

3) students (have the time to do the lower level work - as long as we pay them) - includes a grad student, a team of undergraduate scanners, and one comp sci student.

4) the university structure provides centralization and stability; a site to support positive aggregation of these strengths,

These are the strength inputs. Each of these four components also derive value, with students gaining work experience, archivists building access to a growing body of primary source materials in support of research, repositories adding to their lists of strategies for cultivating and stewarding their collections, and the University becoming more involved in its surrounding community.

Strengths offered by Arca:
- Measuring twice, cutting once.

- Reduction of waste
- Interoperability
- Aggregated point of entry

120 seconds

Arca has been a fabulous choice for Digitized Okanagan History, and through our partnership I can say that although we have 'gotten there together' -- even though we're not done yet. At this point, I will pass the floor to Heidi, who will speak about her experiences with Arca as a collecting repository.
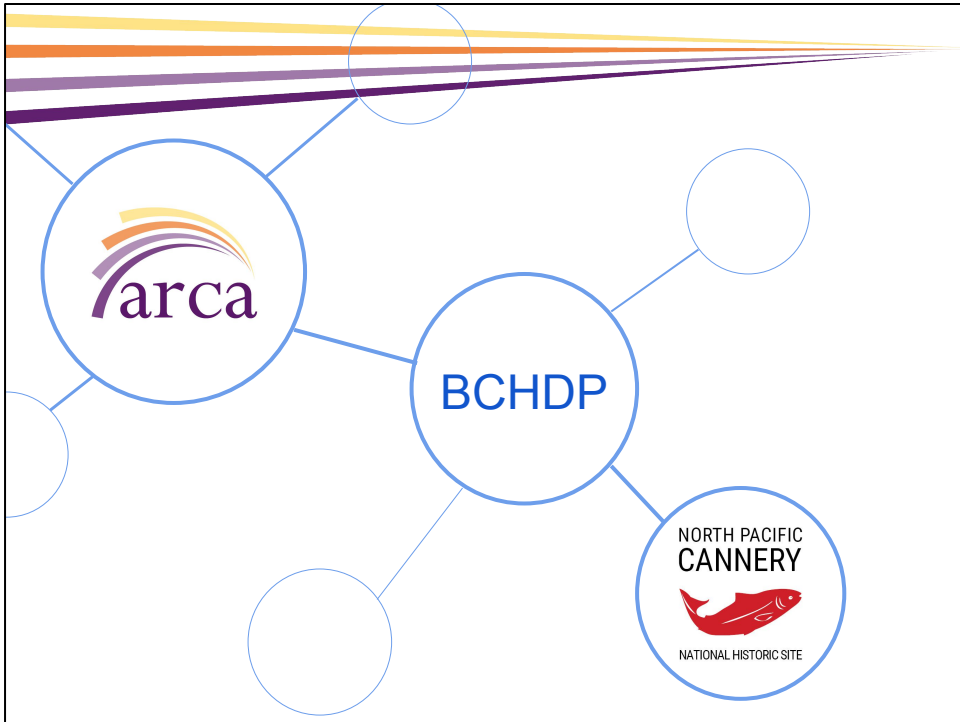
Now that you've heard a bit about what Arca is and how it functions at the higher levels (or the hubs) from Sunni and Paige, I'm going to talk about what it's like to work with Arca from the point of view of a smaller collecting institution.

Gulf of Georgia Cannery NHS

North Pacific Cannery NHS

As you may (or may not) have picked up during the introduction, I'm involved in managing the collections at two National Historic Sites – the Gulf of Georgia Cannery in Richmond, and the North Pacific Cannery in Northern BC. Both are former salmon canneries that today present the history of fishing and canning here on Canada's west coast. While my primary job is at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery my experiences at the North Pacific Cannery will be the main focus for this talk, as it's their collection that I've been working on getting into Arca.

The North Pacific Cannery National Historic Site is located on the on the Inverness Passage of the Skeena River on the North Coast of BC. Technically, it is part of the District of Port Edward, which is a very small municipality (of under 1000 residents), and is about 20 minute drive north of Prince Rupert.

North Pacific Cannery
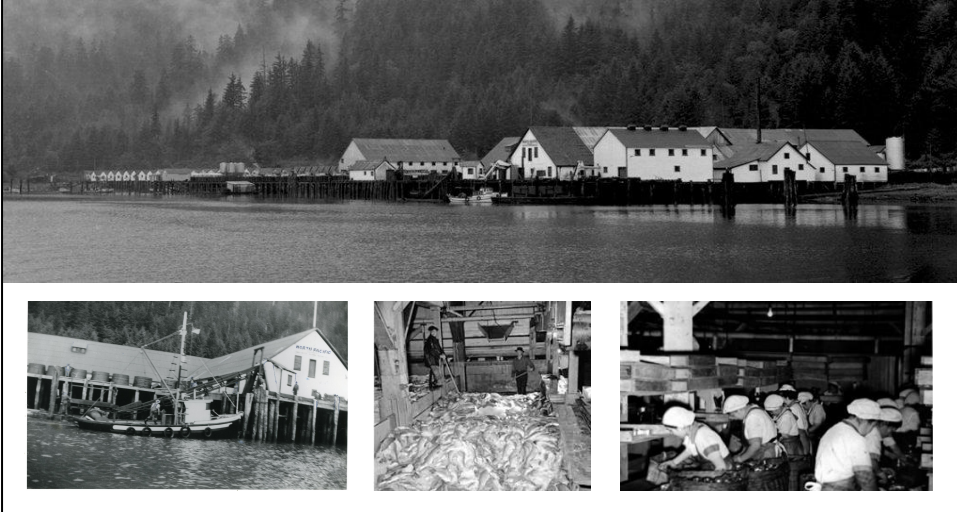
It was first built in 1889 and operated almost continuously as a salmon cannery and fish processing plant until the late 1970s. After that, it operated simply as a facility for repairing boats until it was completely closed and abandoned in 1981. In 1985, it was saved from demolition by a group of local historians and shortly after open to the public as a museum. Today, the site is owned and operated by the Port Edward Historical Society. It opens seasonally to visitors from the beginning of May until the end of September.

North Pacific Cannery NHS

The only full-time staff person who works year-round is their General Manager, while the rest of the staff is made up of seasonal hires who lead tours, greet visitors in the Visitor Centre, and assist with the everyday upkeep of the site. In previous summers, they have also run a building conservation program that hires people learning trades to work on the restoration of buildings at the site (because it's important to make sure that the buildings don't fall into the river!)

Exhibits and Artifacts Storage on site

Archives Storage
(District of Port Edward Office)

They have a large and varied collection that includes artifacts, which are displayed and stored all over the site, as well an extensive holding of archival materials, which for the most part, are stored off-site in the basement of the District of Port Edward office building.

They have not had a General Manager with collections experince since 2016, and even then, that person's time was mainly occupied with the everyday demands of managing the site, and not with the collections.

However, in 2017, they received grant funding for a project to organize their archival collection that allowed them to hire me as a part-time Collections Consultant, and at the end of that year, I was able to assist them in putting together an application to the BC History Digitization Program for funding to digitize their collection of more than 4000 archival images.

Obviously, we were successful in gaining that funding, otherwise I would not be standing here talking to you as part of this panel today.

The BC History Digitization Program, for those of you who are not familiar, is a program that promotes increased access to BC's historical resources by providing matching funds to organizations so that they may undertake digitization projects that result in free online access to unique historical material from around the province.

2018 was the first year that recipients of funding from the BCHDP were offered the opportunity to host their digital objects in Arca, and for various reasons that I'm going to share with you –jumping on this opportunity for the NPC image collection seemed like a fairly simple decision to me.

GOG/ Digital Collection Builder example:
The NPC Digitization Project was not the first BCHDP project that I have managed – in late May of 2010, when I stared at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery, I took over a digitization project that had already been started under the previous Collections Manager. In the original application for that grant, my predecessor had planned to hire a company to create a custom online database that would be integrated with a new general website for the Society – however, this plan had already been put aside a couple months before I

started (mainly due to extra costs that were not included in the original quote used for the project budget, but that would have been necessary in order to get both the database and website that staff there at the time had planned for).

Instead, my predecessor had started looking at different options for hosting our newly digitized collection and had settled on the idea of using Digital Collection Builder – this was a fairly new open-source software being made available through canadiana.org. and a couple other partners.

Long story short, however – at that time, this software had not really been established or tested. The installation was extremely complicated, and well beyond the capabilities of any of the staff at the Gulf of Georgia, and there was not really any help or support available. Even if we had been able to get it installed, I can only image how difficult it probably would have been to use for uploading and managing the collection – and to top it off, nine years later, it doesn't really exist any more anyway.

We ended up hiring a different company to create a custom-built database for us. While it worked and functioned well to begin with, over a few years time, we started to have issues with it that I was not able to fix myself, or even pay the company to fix, as they had folded a couple years before and were not around to help. Soon, the problems that we were experiencing basically caused it to stop working all together, and we no longer were able to provide online access to our image collection.

BC History Digitization Program

Home | About | Browse Collections | Contacts | Logout

Projects from the BC History Digitization Program

The British Columbia History Digitization Program promotes increased access to BC's historical resources by supporting digitization projects that will result in free online access to unique historical material from around the province. On this page you will find the collections of successful BCHDP grant recipients.

For information on how to apply to the program, visit our website.

Search All Collections

Advanced Search

BCHDP Website   Browse Collections

Lumbering scene, Vancouver Island, B.C.

LUMBERING SCENE, VANCOUVER ISLAND, B.C.

https://bchdp.arcabc.ca/
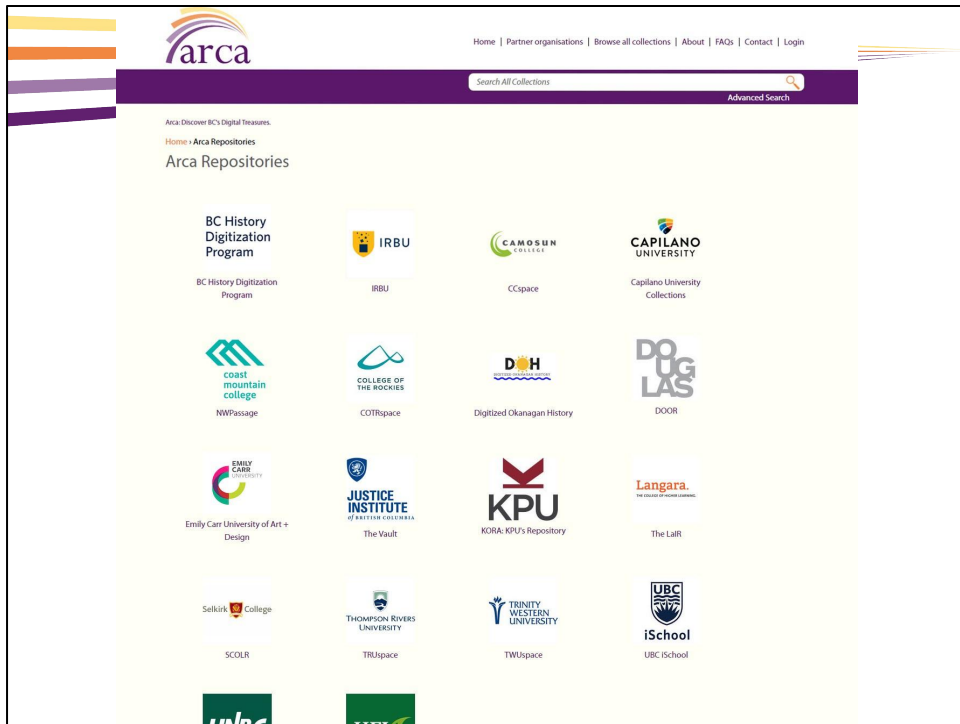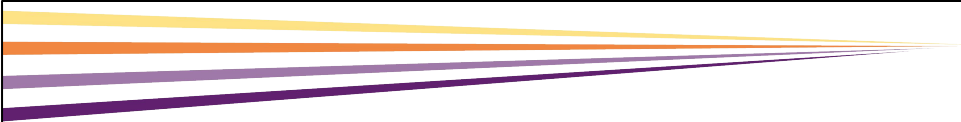
In comparison, when I first looked into Arca, it was easy to see that it was a well-established platform already being used by many large and well-known institutions, and with a good amount of digital content already existing within it.

Benefits of using Arca:

- Cuts down on overall cost - allocate more time and resources to digitization

There are a number of other benefits to using Arca – some of which I had anticipated before starting to use it, and others that I have discovered along the way:

· Because of the partnership established between the BCELN and the BCHDP, hosting on Arca will be free for NPC for at least the first 3 years – which greatly cut down on the overall cost of the project, making it possible for more time and resources to be put into the actual digitization of the materials.

  o Because BCHDP is a matching program, and NPC has limited funds, the overall cost of the project that we proposed could only go so high before it would have become infeasible. Not having to spend a large chunk of the funding to establish an online database for providing access to the digital images (which is a key requirement of the program) meant that we could put more funds towards paying the student to do the digitization, which in turn resulted in a much longer period of work, and a greater number of images being digitized overall.

  o The cost to hire the company that custom built the database

for the Gulf of Georgia collection, for example, was approximately 20-25% of the entire project (and this did not include the yearly server fees that we had to pay going forward to maintain hosting of the database), which meant we had less funding to put into our digitization, and more of my time was spent researching, hiring, and working with the company to get our images online that could have potentially been used to accomplish other collections projects that year.

Collections in the BC History Digitization Program Arca Site

Search collection

This collection ▾

[   ] search

BC History Digitization Program

| View | Manage | Edit metadata |

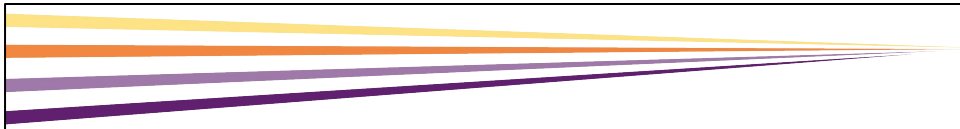Title: **Barkerville Historic Town**
Date:

Title: **Eleanor Muehle Newspaper Archive**
Date:

Title: **North Pacific Cannery Collection**
Date:

Benefits of using Arca:

- Cuts down on overall cost - allocate more time and resources to digitization
- Arca is supported

With Arca, support is readily available - the Arca team is there to provide training and support for managing hosted collections

- o Case in point, I was having an issue just the other day – one email to Sunni later, and I was in a collaborative chat room with her, and she was able to pull in Brandon, one of their technical administrators to assist, and the problem was solved.
- o I know that as contractor for NPC, I will not be involved in managing this collection indefinitely – but I also know that going forward, any staff at the site should be able to easily access and search this collection, and get assistance and training from the Arca team to make changes or additions as needed.

A collection within the North Pacific Cannery Collection

Search collection

This collection ▼

[   ] [search]

Refine Your Search

Date
1952 - 1954
(years)

[Filter]

Genre
• photographs   (5)   + -

Topic
• salmon   (3)   + -
• fish packer boat   (2)   + -

Source
• npc   (6)   + -

Home › Browse Collections › North Pacific Cannery Collection › Bill Pearce Collection

Bill Pearce Collection

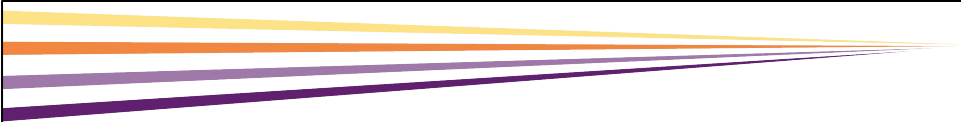| View | Manage | Edit metadata |

Title: Unloading the salmon from the Wilmar
Date: 1953
Type: still image
Genre: photographs
Description: Unloading salmon from the "Wilmar" on the near side and an unnamed packer on the far side. Gerry Philippson can be seen talking to a worker toward the stern of this packer

Title: Keith Philippson at the wheel of his packer the Pacific Surf at the North Pacific Cannery
Date: 1953
Type: still image
Genre: photographs
Description: Keith Philppson at the wheel of his packer boat the Pacific Surf at the North Pacific Cannery.

Title: Gerry Philippson unloading salmon from a gill netter into the weighing scales at the North Pacific Cannery
Date: 1953

Benefits of using Arca:

- Cuts down on overall cost - allocate more time and resources to digitization
- Arca is supported
- Arca is centrally maintained

Arca is maintained and the technology is regularly updated – Many smaller organizations, like North Pacific Cannery, do not have the staffing capacity or expertise to administer their own online repository that fulfils all requirements of the BCHDP for digital preservation. Having a centrally maintained solution eliminates the need for organizations to worry about software upgrades and compatibility with future computer systems
- Again, I know that going forward, even without a collections person working at NPC, the collection hosted in Arca will be maintained and remain accessible to users both internally (staff, etc.) and externally (researchers, etc.).

Unloading the salmon from the Wilmar

View | Manage | Edit metadata

Download
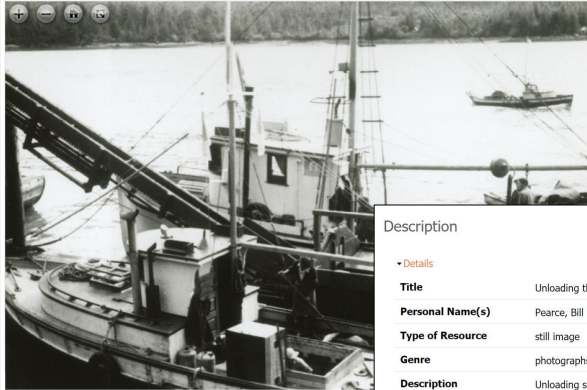
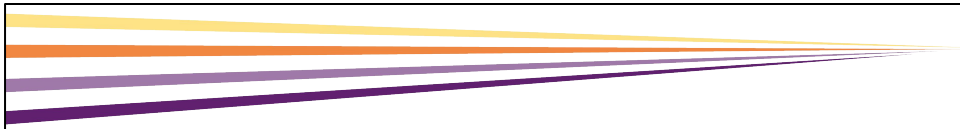

Individual Image

Image Description

Description

▾ Details

Title	Unloading the salmon from the Wilmar
Personal Name(s)	Pearce, Bill
Type of Resource	still image
Genre	photographs
Description	Unloading salmon from the "Wilmar" on the near side and an unnamed packer on the far side. Gerry Philippson can be seen talking to a worker toward the stern of this packer
Identifier (local)	P2018.003.004
Form	nonprojected graphic
Extent	1 photograph : black and white ; 5 x 7 in
Topical Subject(s)	fish packer boat salmon
Geographical Subject(s)	North Pacific Cannery Skeena River, BC

▸ Map

Benefits of using Arca:

- Cuts down on overall cost - allocate more time and resources to digitization
- Arca is supported
- Arca is centrally maintained
- Collections become part of a province-wide network - increases discoverability

· Having your collection in Arca – being a collection in that hub and spoke model that both Paige and Sunni talked about earlier – means that you are part of a Province-wide repository that is just continuing to grow. Soon, if not already, Arca will be the place that researchers and even just the interested public will go to search and discover information in BC.

  o Users will be able to search across multiple institutions, and find material easier and faster than having to search across the web to find individual databases containing the information that they want

  o Having all of these collections in essentially one place should also make it easier for users to discover new collections (and the individual institutions that hold these collections) – so in theory, if you didn't know about the North Pacific Cannery, but you went on Arca and searched for images of salmon, you would likely come across their collection, and may potentially be enticed to visit there one day!

Questions?

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