Profile: Tom Smyth
Managing Librarian
Library and Archives Canada

Describe your early background.

I grew up in Toronto and attended Leaside High School. I then went to the University of Toronto where I did a Specialist Honours BA and then an MA in Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations. I worked in research within the department for a time, then went to the Faculty of Information Studies at U. of T. where I obtained my Master’s of Library and Information Studies (concentrating primarily on Information Management and specialized reference).

What (or who) influenced you to pursue a career in libraries?

During my graduate work, I spent a lot of time in special archives and special and rare book collections both at the University of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum. Working in the collections really grew on me and influenced me to attend the library school at U. of T.

Where are you working now, and what do you like best about your current job?

I work at Library and Archives Canada in Gatineau, QC, where I'm a manager and a digital library subject matter expert. My duties are a hybrid of working on legal deposit policy matters, developing several digital library special collections, running the institutional web harvesting program, and contributing to or managing multiple digital ingest systems and software development projects. I really enjoy the mix of writing, systems, and web curation work, and that no two days at work are ever the same.

What is your most memorable library experience?

My most memorable experience to date was leading a major project for establishing a web archive of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic games at LAC in collaboration with the Federal Secretariat at Heritage Canada. My team and I developed a robust web curation methodology, informed by Olympics Studies, for selecting what to acquire, how much, and at what time intervals, in order to build a web archive that was a continuous record of the planning, conduct and results of the Vancouver games, while simultaneously constructing a robust dataset worthy of extensive data mining. We crawled in intervals for about 15 months to build the archive, and this was the first time
we had LAC's harvesting systems operating at 'maximum horsepower' for a sustained period (20 independent crawler simultaneously collecting web resources in intervals).

**Name one person you admire, and explain why.**

My father. Have you seen the TED talk by Angela Lee Duckworth on "Grit"? He taught me this concept but had given it a much different name!

**What do you do for recreation?**

I admit to a recent addiction to MOOCs, and I've been taking a lot of courses related to my academic research interests on the side. At the same time, it has been a valuable opportunity to see the various MOOC environments firsthand and think about how they could be used in our profession (running subject-specialist research methodology courses comes to mind). I'm obviously a proponent of the “teaching librarian” school.

**Name an interesting book or article you’ve read recently. What appealed to you about it?**

I've recently picked up Adrian Brown's book *Practical Digital Preservation: A How-To Guide for Organizations of Any Size* and am looking forward to comparing it to Ross Harvey's and David Giaretta's works on the same subjects. Interesting stuff (to me anyway!)

**Is there anything else you’d like to mention that might interest *Partnership* readers?**

LAC has reinitiated its crawls of the Government of Canada web presence as of September 2010 and has recently undertaken thematic web harvesting projects to document major cultural, historical and political events in Canada as they have arisen. You'll need to drop me a line to hear more!

**What accomplishment are you most proud of?**

Definitely the Vancouver 2010 project (which was showcased in Canada's Performance Report 2009-2010!)

**What issues do you think will have a big impact on libraries in the next few years?**

As the profession evolves away from “helping clients find relevant resources” to judging the quality of information and connecting clients with the most pertinent and current pieces to fit their research needs, we must also consider how we’ll deliver this information to the client in meaningful ways. My day-to-day work is oriented around coming to grips with the exponential growth and ubiquity of Web and born-digital
commercial publishing at the National Library, while developing strategies and technology solutions for managing these resources and providing access to them in ways that respect the client's information seeking behaviour, his or her technology expectations, and balancing the current realities of intellectual property law. I see these issues being central to the future of the profession.

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?

China. I've been a "Chinawatcher" for years and am also very interested in pre- and early imperial Chinese history. I would love to take a couple of months to really see the country firsthand and take in its enormous history.