

# QUESCREN launches web library of English-speaking community history

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An extensive and growing library of documents related to the history of Quebec's English-speaking communities is now available online thanks to the work of the Quebec English-speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREN) at Montreal's Concordia University.

The Community Knowledge Open Library (CKOL) was launched March 10.

CKOL "currently contains over 1,200 documents gathered from over 25 groups working with English speaking communities in Quebec," QUESCREN research associate Patrick Donovan said. "This resource aims to increase awareness

and understanding of English-speaking Quebec by expanding the knowledge base, preserving and disseminating material that is vulnerable to disappearance and supporting the production of research and evidence-based policy."

The online library aspires to be a repository of what is commonly called grey literature – content produced outside of traditional publishing channels, often by government agencies, community organizations and nonprofits. It can – and in the case of CKOL, does – include everything from organizational newsletters to self-published cookbooks. The developers of CKOL hope it will become a resource for researchers and amateur historians exploring the history of Quebec's English-speaking communities.

Repositories such as CKOL "are all the more important, because grey literature doesn't have the same permanence as formal publishing; sometimes there's only one copy and sometimes that copy gets lost," explained librarian Rebecca Miller, classification system development and cataloguing consultant at CKOL.

CKOL "plays this really interesting, kind of stabilizing centralizing role, kind of gathering all these materials from these community groups across the province, both old and new, and presents this wide range of documents in a widely accessible way. It will be so valuable for different types of users who will use these resources in many different ways," said Miller. The Quebec Community Groups

Network, the English Language Arts Network, Jeffery Hale-Saint Brigid's and Voice of English-speaking Québec are among the more than 20 organizations that have begun to submit material. The documents can be searched by topic, region or format. As of this writing, the oldest documents currently digitized date to 1943, but organizers hope the library can go further back in time.

Priscilla Griffin is the office manager at the Coasters' Association, a community organization based in St. Paul's River on the Lower North Shore, advocating for the economic and social development of English speakers in the 14

mostly English-speaking communities scattered along the North Shore between Kegaska (where Highway 138 ends) and Blanc-Sablon. "If you go online, you don't see a lot of information about our region, especially in English, and you feel lost," said Griffin. "Anyone who wants to research us, even our own people, doesn't know half of what's going on in our region, because of lack of [access to] communication. This library could open up a real door for us."

Donovan said QUESCREN, currently supported by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise, was

hoping to secure sustainable funding to allow it to better support organizations that want to digitize and share their archives.

The project is "very open to [suggestions from] any community members for how to grow this project reasonably and fairly and always with an eye to inclusiveness," Lorraine O'Donnell of QUESCREN said.

The Community Knowledge Open Library can be accessed at [ckol.quescren.ca](http://ckol.quescren.ca).

*A version of this story previously appeared in the Brome County News. It has been republished here thanks to the Local Journalism Initiative.*