

Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group

Interim Report, January 2017

The Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) populated a multi-stakeholder working group in July 2016 to establish a shared vision, principles and goals that will act as a framework for advanced, robust, sustainable, collaborative models for the Canadian dissemination of the scholarly record. Terms of reference for the Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group (CSPWG) are attached (Appendix A). Membership includes representation from the Canadian scholarly journal publishing community, university presses, research libraries, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and researchers from a variety of disciplines. There is substantial shared interest in building a more robust and sustainable future for Canadian scholarly publishing. In several virtual meetings to date, as well as an in-person working meeting held November 7, 2016 at the University of Ottawa, the group has built substantial goodwill to work together on strengthening Canadian scholarly publishing.

Survey of the Current Landscape

We are fortunate in Canada to be operating on a scale that is manageable, where a few strong, well-supported initiatives could reshape the scholarly publishing landscape in very positive ways toward a more sustainable future. We have an excellent basis for moving forward with support from funders such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Department of Canadian Heritage, and others. We can build on the solid foundation of excellent university presses, well-established journals, and world-class innovations such as the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), Érudit, and Canadian Science Publishing. Canadian research libraries are actively collaborating on innovations in scholarly publishing and have demonstrated their willingness to provide both practical and financial support for new models.

Traditional economic models for Canadian scholarly publishing, both journals and monographs, have systemic sustainability issues due to a number of factors. Subscription revenues are in some cases limited by a small reader base due to the size of their potential market. A lack of resources to dedicate to marketing can further exacerbate the situation. There is a reliance on grant funding or subsidies and in-kind contributions, and there are limited professional development opportunities for editors and publishing personnel, as well as a dependence on volunteerism. Although these issues are reflective of scholarly publishing in general, they are intensified by the unique features and relatively small scale of the Canadian environment.

The [2015 Tri-Council Open Access Policy](#) and [2016 Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management](#) have been important steps toward openness and encouraging data stewardship in the research process. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that Canada lacks clear national policies that offer structure to scholarly publishing, as compared to Europe and other jurisdictions.

Members of the group have shared information about a variety of programs currently underway in Canadian scholarly publishing, and considered gaps and barriers to the development of a more robust system. Several initiatives for transition to open access are under discussion, including the following:

- An expansion of the current partnership between Érudit and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)
 - This partnership builds a new relationship between journals and libraries, helping to provide financial support to journals during their transition to open access.
- A proposal for a Canadian scholarly publishing cooperative
 - This idea proposes a Subscription Equivalent Transition strategy to support journals during their flip to open access.
- Open Access monograph publishing underway at several university presses
 - Athabasca, Ottawa, Calgary, and others all have successful open access programs.
- The establishment in 2016 of Concordia University Press
 - This press was established from inception as a fully open access university press.
- Examples of international disciplinary efforts to flip to open access
 - [SCOAP3](#) and [Libraria](#) are two examples of note

Formative ideas for new initiatives that could strengthen or transform the landscape are also under consideration. These include a proposal for a new Journal Impact and Innovation Fund (working title) from the Canadian Association of Learned Journals, which would allow Canadian scholarly journals to enhance impact based on both quality and accessibility through innovation. Another potential project is a Canadian version of [Knowledge Unlatched](#), focusing on Canadian monograph titles. Knowledge Unlatched provides a crowdfunding platform for libraries to support open access by selecting publisher titles at a clear and sustainable price.

The economics of publishing scholarly monographs in Canada have also been considered, including recent studies on the cost of university press publishing. Both strengths and constraints of the current Canadian funding models for scholarly books have also been discussed.

Scholarly Publishing as Research Infrastructure

The Working Group affirms that Canada needs a robust and sustainable scholarly publishing system that meets the needs of Canadian researchers. The infrastructure for research dissemination is an essential part of the research environment. Distribution of research needs to be considered as an essential component of the research process, alongside research itself, adding to our collective store of knowledge, enriching industry, government and the public, and providing the foundation for further knowledge production. We also recognize that scholarly publications act as a form of capital within the academic community. They function as a significant currency, in the markets of tenure, promotion, and granting.

The recognition of Érudit as a Major Scientific Initiative by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the integration of PKP into Érudit's 2017-2022 funding renewal is a major step toward the creation of an integrated service offering editorial management, publishing, distribution, and preservation of Canadian scholarly journals. It will be a significant development of the infrastructure for Canadian scholarly journals to see these generally adopted by both linguistic communities in Canada and in widespread use across the country. While supporting independent journals and publishers, this development will make it possible to work collectively to leverage a shared platform with marketing, promotion, and metadata services.

The Canadian Scholarly Publishing Environment

Canadian scholarly publishing does not exist in a purely market-driven space in the economy. Canadian journals must compete alongside titles from large for-profit multinational corporations while, for the most part, independent Canadian publishers are not-for-profit, and often operating with very limited means. We are also currently facing the reality that journals from some Canadian scholarly societies are beginning to be drawn to major for-profit publishers, attracted by their well-developed infrastructure and extensive marketing reach, among other features. A coordinated national initiative and improved publishing infrastructure within Canada can provide an alternative to these societies and counter this trend.

Independent not-for-profit scholarly publishers in Canada have long been supported by funding programs from SSHRC, Canada Council for the Arts, and other sources. In the case of some university presses there is also financial support from parent institutions. Due to the size of the market, it is widely acknowledged that this support is necessary to sustain Canadian publishing. We agree that these investments are critical in order to share the outputs of Canadian scholarship within and beyond Canada, to preserve Canadian culture, education, and language, and to provide venues for publishing about Canada and Canadians. Without a healthy publishing infrastructure in Canada, there is a very real risk that research unique to Canada will go unpublished and remain invisible.

There is growing evidence that libraries are an important player in the landscape. Libraries are now hosting close to 300 scholarly journals at 36 universities across

Canada. Of these, 43 academic journals (16 percent) appear to have flipped to open access from their earlier subscription state while hosted at libraries. Meanwhile, the subscription journals in this group have relatively low institutional subscriptions fees – all below \$500/year – and the overwhelming majority offer open access after an embargo period ranging from six months to five years.¹

The current Canadian scholarly publishing environment is further characterized by the diversity of scholarly journals produced, including a number of internationally ranked journals and several important niche journals. With less than 0.5% of the world’s population, Canada’s researchers produce 4.1% of the world’s scholarly papers and nearly 5% of the world’s most frequently cited papers. Canada ranks first in the G7 in the number of publications produced on a per capita basis (data derived from Web of Science).² Strong Canadian publishing outlets are needed to ensure that Canadian researchers have access to suitable venues to distribute the results of their research.

Canadian scholarly publishing includes some significant journal publishers, namely Canadian Science Publishing and the University of Toronto Press, but the abundance of independent Canadian journals are concentrated in the social sciences and humanities. For this reason, solutions for Canadian scholarly publishing are likely to be designed with social sciences and humanities journals in mind as the primary participants, and solutions must work within the ecosystem of those disciplines.

Based on an analysis of data from Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory about the number of journals produced per country, Canada ranks 15th in the world. Yet many of these are created and then cease operations—in fact, 20% of journals started up in Canada have ceased, slightly higher than any other country in the world.³ This fact highlights the fragility of the Canadian scholarly journal environment. Independent Canadian journals are also vulnerable to aggressive approaches by predatory publishers. We are aware that this activity is increasing in frequency, as predatory publishers become interested in acquiring established journals to improve the credibility of their imprint and increase their own revenue streams.

¹ [J. Willinsky], “Modeling an Open Access Publishing Cooperative for Canadian Journals,” 2016. Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/document/d/103YBNHpiCThjdgGQO149rJB-Xh-402ji1N35D7h_Ghl/edit, in progress.

² V. Larivière, “On the Journal Publishing Landscape in Canada,” unpublished presentation to Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group, Ottawa: Nov 7, 2016.

³ Ibid

Draft Principles for Sustainable Scholarly Publishing

The CSPWG affirms that a sustainable Canadian Scholarly Publishing system will be characterized by the following principles.

Non-Profit

A sustainable scholarly publishing system is one in which the proceeds of Canadian publishing are fed back into the system to fuel growth and innovation. Proceeds are returned to the publishing system and back into academic ventures, rather than into commercial profits and returns for private shareholders. There is transparency about the costs of publishing, with accountability back to the academic community.

High Quality

Rigorous peer review is critical to the research mission and to ensuring the quality of published material. Canadian scholarly publishing outlets should continue to uphold the highest standards of quality in their selection and editorial processes.

Made in Canada

In order to preserve Canadian culture, education, and language, and to provide venues for publishing about Canada and Canadians, it is imperative that an array of made-in-Canada publishing options is nurtured. Although many Canadian researchers will seek international publishing outlets, Canada needs strong outlets in both official languages that provide world-class venues for publishing the best of Canadian and international research, particularly in the humanities and social sciences.

Maximum Openness

The overarching goal of scholarly publishing is to ensure wide-reaching dissemination of research and scholarship. In order to make scholarly output as widely available as possible, it should in all cases be as open as possible. This openness must be achieved while retaining a focus on the dissemination of scholarship as a permanent record of research, and ensuring the ongoing financial viability of the publishing outlets.

Builds on Strength

The solutions to create a more sustainable Canadian scholarly publishing system will be built upon the existing foundations. World-class innovations such as Canadian Science Publishing, Érudit, Islandora, vibrant university presses, and others, will form the backbone of a stronger system for the future. These made-in-Canada solutions can be knit together and strengthened to create a publishing network required by an intellectually and culturally vibrant and diverse small nation.

Flexible and Adaptable

As scholarship evolves and new scholarly forms emerge, the publishing apparatus must also evolve to ensure the widespread dissemination and long-term preservation of the outputs of scholarship. Durable scholarly journals and monographs are part of a sustainable future for Canadian publishing, but in the coming years, solutions that focus on new scholarly forms may prove to be equally important. New forms include, but are not limited to, interactive websites, research data, blogs, databases, and more. Ensuring the preservation of this new record of scholarship represents a considerable challenge that requires flexibility and innovation.

Model Framework for Sustainable Scholarly Publishing

Building on these principles, the CSPWG will recommend a model framework in our final report in Spring 2017. While there are some general comments and principles governing all forms of scholarly publishing, we anticipate making separate recommendations about scholarly journals, monographs, and new scholarly forms. Each format has its own unique characteristics and plays a distinct role in the Canadian publishing ecosystem.

The heterogeneity of Canadian publishing will make it difficult to find simple and single solutions. We therefore expect that a workable framework will include a multiplicity of models and that the long-term solution for Canadian scholarly publishing will be iterative. The system is complex and evolving. Although it will not be reformed once in 2017 and set for an indefinite period, we agree that a bright future is both necessary and possible. Many of the separate but closely related initiatives currently underway can be integrated into a more comprehensive strategy to move toward that future.

Appendix A: Terms of Reference

Nurturing Canadian Scholarly Publishing: A Working Group on Sustainable Collaborative Models

Purpose

Scholars, research funders, libraries, academic institutions and a growing number of scholarly publishers share a common goal of enabling research results to be widely distributed and openly accessible, internationally, in public high quality publishing venues at the lowest possible costs. This working group will bring together those stakeholders to establish a shared vision, principles, and goals that will act as a framework for advanced, robust, sustainable, collaborative models for the Canadian dissemination of the scholarly record. New journal and article publishing models will be explored along with their related research data, as well as monographs and new forms of scholarship. In addition, funding scenarios for new models will be discussed and assessed for feasibility. The outcomes will inform the development and reinforcement of platforms in the Canadian research landscape as a key component of a larger knowledge mobilization strategy.

Name

Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group

Activities (to include but not limited to the following):

1. Consider the opportunities of recent developments in the scholarly communications landscape, drawing on studies and documents of stakeholder groups.
2. Follow closely and consider the experiences of current initiatives such as the Érudit-PKP partnership.
3. Ensure engagement of stakeholder communities to inform working group deliverables.
4. Establish a vision and core set of principles that will advance Canadian publishing and meet stakeholder needs.
5. Propose initial goals for the development and reinforcement of publishing services or platforms.
6. Discuss and provide observations on organizational and financial model options, drawing from existing entities and exploring new possibilities.
7. Compile findings into a framework to inform and advance strategic planning and investments in emerging Canadian publishing services and platforms.

Outcomes

- A set of sustainable collaborative scholarly publishing model principles.
- A collaborative scholarly publishing model framework including goals and potential business models for publishing services or platforms.

Working Relationships

This initiative is separate from but complements and maintains a close working relationship with several current initiatives, including the Portage Network, a Canadian repositories meeting to be convened by CARL in Fall 2016, the CRKN-Érudit partnership, the Érudit-PKP

partnership, and CARL's emerging roadmap for advancing scholarly communications. The Chair of the working group will report on its activities to CARL's Advancing Research Committee and to other stakeholder organizations as requested, and may submit written recommendations on behalf of the group to participating organizations.

Minutes and reports of the working group are not confidential unless determined so by the group.

Membership

- Gwen Bird, Canadian Association of Research Libraries (Chair)
- Clare Appavoo, Canadian Research Knowledge Network
- Josée Dallaire, Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Alan Darnell, OCUL/Scholars Portal
- Suzanne Kettley, Canadian Association of Learned Journals
- Joy Kirchner, Canadian Association of Research Libraries' Advancing Research Committee
- Lara Mainville, Association of Canadian University Presses
- Claire Millington, Universities Canada
- Tanja Niemann, Érudit
- Brian Owen, Public Knowledge Project
- Tim Wilson, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
- Researchers representing the sciences, social sciences and humanities
 - Susan Brown, Canada Research Chair in Collaborative Digital Scholarship and Professor of English, University of Guelph
 - Nicholas Kevlahan, Professor of Mathematics, McMaster University
 - Vincent Larivière, Canada Research Chair on the Transformations of Scholarly Communication and Associate Professor of Information Science at the École de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de l'information, Université de Montréal

Secretariat and Chair

The Chair's role is to provide facilitative leadership, ensuring that all members have opportunities to engage actively and provide their organizations' perspectives in the group's activities. CARL will provide administrative support such as meeting organization and minutes, and a member of the CARL Board will chair the committee.

Budget

Some participating stakeholders (Érudit, PKP) have offered to support working group activities with cash or in-kind support; details to be determined.

Timeframe

The working group will convene in July 2016, deliver a progress report by November 1, 2016, and conclude no later than April 1, 2017.