Summary

It is recommended that the Government of Canada:

1. Increase the Digital Research Alliance of Canada funding allocation for 2025-2030 from $572.5M to $1B to enhance Canadian research capacity.
2. Renew funding for the Accessible Digital Books—Support for Organizations program within the Canada Book Fund for another 5 years at the same level ($22.8M) to assist the Canadian publishing industry to create born-accessible materials for people with print disabilities.
3. Provide new funding of $20M divided into two $10M funding initiatives over three years, through targeted federal agencies, to foster increased production and use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in post-secondary education. In addition, we recommend that a portion of funding to provincial and territorial governments under the Action Plan for Official Languages: 2023-2028 be used to support OER in French.
4. Increase Library and Archives Canada’s base budget by $35M to enable it to optimize use of digital technologies and accelerate the transition of documentary heritage and federal government record-keeping to the digital environment.
Introduction

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) is the leadership organization for Canada’s research library community. The Association includes the 29 largest university libraries across the country, and aims to foster a sustainable, inclusive and effective Canadian research ecosystem.

Recommendations

Renewed Support for Digital Research Infrastructure

The Digital Research Alliance of Canada (the Alliance) brings together experts in advanced research computing, research data management and research software to accelerate discovery by transforming how digital research infrastructure (DRI) is designed, managed, sustained and delivered to Canada’s researchers and their global collaborators.

In March 2023, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) approved $228.3 million over 2023-25 for DRI initiatives, which was good news for Canada’s researchers. Like CANARIE and the Canada Foundation for Innovation – both of which fund other parts of research infrastructure – Alliance funding must be continued with a stable, increased allocation for 2025-2030.

Canada’s high performance computing (HPC) capacity is comparatively weak and under-serving Canadian researchers. Leadership at a national level is needed to strategically address the urgent, burgeoning and widespread need for hybrid cloud storage, and the opportunities and challenges afforded by artificial intelligence (AI).

In addition to the substantial investment needed for networked HPC, national research infrastructure requires effective research data management (RDM) so that Canada’s data assets are FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable). Canada can gain major efficiencies by streamlining the research application, funding, and evaluation ecosystem by implementing a national Persistent Identifiers (PIIDs) strategy. Training remains a critical need; support for the development and delivery of a national portal is integral to developing research capacity and strengthening technical knowledge and practice across the entire digital research system. DRI must enable Canadian researchers in all disciplines, even those typically not considered highly reliant on technology, by providing infrastructure comparable to their global peers.
The needs for core national DRI services are not exclusive to academic researchers. Government researchers and industry partners share the same requirements and produce similar research outputs. Governments have disciplinary research strengths (e.g. environment, natural resources, demographics, health – to name a few), longstanding data experience, and vast volumes of valuable Canadian data. It is clear that the Canadian academic, government, and private sectors need to both contribute to and benefit from national DRI.

**Recommendation:** Increase the Digital Research Alliance of Canada funding allocation for 2025-2030 from $572.5M to $1B to enhance Canadian research capacity.

**Renewed support for Accessible Publishing**

Building on commitments made during the 2021 federal election, the mandate letter for the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability asks the Minister to prioritize the government’s “commitment to support national disability organizations to build capacity and partner in efforts to eliminate systemic barriers and to permanently fund support services that ensure equitable access to reading and other published works for Canadians with print disabilities.” This directive supports the promises made by the Liberal Party in 2021 “to make permanent funding to support services that ensure equitable access to reading and other published works for Canadians with print disabilities so that more Canadians are able to participate in these activities fully.”

Providing broad and equitable access to information and scholarly knowledge is the core mission of libraries. But without government assistance, an industry-led solution to providing accessible reading materials will not satisfy the demand of those requiring accessible reading services.

The Budget 2019 commitment of $22.8 million over five years to develop the sustainable production and distribution of accessible digital books by independent Canadian publishers through the Canada Book Fund ended in March 2024 and although there was some progress made, there is much more to be done. Budget 2024 announced an additional $10M investment to support Canadian authors and publishers. This is a good step forward in addressing general marketplace shifts, however, there remains a real need to invest in the production of books for people who are print disabled.

[The ARL/CARL Task Force on Marrakesh Treaty Implementation: Final Report](2023) demonstrates that there remains a significant gap in the availability of materials for
people with print disabilities. Work must not stop until all born-digital materials are born accessible.

By continuing to fund the production of born-accessible works, the Canadian government will be committing to its goals under the Marrakesh Treaty and will address the commitments made in both the Minister’s letter and the Liberal Party of Canada’s Disability Statement.

**Recommendation:** Renew funding for the Accessible Digital Books—Support for Organizations program within the Canada Book Fund for the next 5 years at the same level ($22.8M) to assist the Canadian publishing industry to create born-accessible materials for people with print disabilities.

### Federal Support for Canadian Open Educational Resources (OER)

Open Educational Resources (OER) are openly licensed teaching and learning materials that can be widely distributed and adapted, and carry no cost to the user. Academic libraries recognize that the use of OER in post-secondary educational contexts provides numerous benefits to both students and instructors. Textbooks typically cost $800-$1000 per year, creating major financial hurdles for some students.¹ For post-secondary students and faculty, the primary benefit of OER is access to cost-free learning materials, as well as access to online resources that are created with pedagogical innovation in mind. Investment in OER has repeatedly been found to produce savings: estimated student savings from British Columbia exceed $39.1 million, and eCampus Ontario notes an average of $87 in savings per student per course that uses an OER.

Considering the benefits of OER, a pan-Canadian working group has been developing a national approach that would foster greater equity of access and use of OER across the Canadian post-secondary sector, elevating the best of existing models and practices that currently only a handful of provinces have adopted.

While we recognize that education is largely a provincial and territorial jurisdiction, CARL and other post-secondary education stakeholders believe there is a responsibility for the Government of Canada to foster certain national initiatives promoting the production, visibility and use of OER.

First, as a founding UNESCO member, Canada is responsible for upholding and advancing the principles outlined in the 2019 UNESCO Recommendation on OER.

Among other things, it calls for building supportive policies for OER, which happens most effectively at the federal level. We ask that the Federal Government adopt the UNESCO Recommendation on OER and its principles.

We also propose a new federal commitment to OER, administered through several federal departments or agencies, that facilitates a three-year pilot with funding for:

- A $10M pilot program to foster OER creation and enable deployment of common production and discovery infrastructure, to support OER created in English, French, and Indigenous languages, by and for those communities, and translations of OER among these languages, to be administered by SSHRC on behalf of the granting agencies.
- An additional $10M for First Nations, Inuit and Métis OER to 1) to consult with community elders, and build capacity for Indigenous communities to develop their own OER, including Indigenous language materials for language revitalization, in alignment with intellectual property considerations outlined in UNDRIP; with funds being administered by Indigenous Services Canada; 2) to develop OER related to Truth and Reconciliation, relevant to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian settlers and in alignment with intellectual property considerations outlined in UNDRIP; with funds administered by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

CARL was pleased to see that $4.1B was allocated to the Action Plan for Official Languages: 2023-2028. We hope that some funding already transferred to provinces and territories will be allocated to support OER in French and recommend that, in future federal funding transfers, some funding will be specifically earmarked to support OER in French.

**Recommendation:** Provide new funding of $20M divided into two $10M funding initiatives spread over three years, through targeted federal agencies, to foster increased production and use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in post-secondary education. In addition, we recommend that a portion of funding to provincial and territorial governments under the *Action Plan for Official Languages: 2023-2028* be used to support OER in French.

**Digital Optimization at Library and Archives Canada**

The *Library and Archives Canada Act* (2004, S. 7) requires LAC “(a) to acquire and preserve the documentary heritage; (b) to make that heritage known to Canadians and to anyone with an interest in Canada and to facilitate access to it; [and] (c) to be the permanent repository of publications of the Government of Canada and of
government and ministerial records that are of historical or archival value.” These three key tenets of its mandate are vital and enduring but the context in which they are executed has radically shifted to an ever-evolving digital environment.

To its credit, LAC has worked to develop new policy, standards, processes, infrastructure, and expertise to respond to the digital shift ever since its creation (through National Library and National Archives merger) twenty years ago.

Now, LAC is poised to advance new, ambitious, and innovative initiatives to fully realize the opportunities for better access and operational efficiencies afforded by digital technologies. Initiatives such as mass digitization, AI-generated metadata, and the development and deployment of modern technological infrastructure are essential for LAC service optimization and necessary in fulfilling its mandate and meeting user expectations.

Under its government archives mandate, LAC holds archival records for 107 active and over 100 defunct government departments. Last year, LAC – and its many clients making Access to Information requests – benefited from significant investments made by the government in the LAC ATIP program (see its Action Plan and Program Updates). Positive impacts resulted from the new trust and transparency strategy, which includes new Policy Guidance on the Disclosure of Historical Records. Continued efforts, including government support and funding, in these areas will be essential.

Beyond its proposed digital optimization initiatives and continuing government record-keeping improvements, there is ongoing development of LAC’s collections to better reflect the diversity of Canada’s voices. The institution has numerous Indigenous Documentary Heritage Initiatives that support reconciliation between the Government of Canada and First Nations, Inuit, and the Métis Nation. LAC has a strong vision for the rest of this decade, and will demonstrate its new service delivery model and digital vision when it opens the Ādisōke facility, a joint project between LAC and Ottawa Public Library, in 2026.

LAC is a world-leading national library and national archives with a rich, broad mandate but it is seeking to strengthen its visibility and beneficial impact on the lives of Canadians. The bold digital transformations at LAC require a modest, sustained increase in Government of Canada investment.

**Recommendation:** Increase Library and Archives Canada’s base budget by $35M to enable it to optimize use of digital technologies and accelerate the transition of documentary heritage and federal government record-keeping to the digital environment.