CARL Brief on the Support for the Creation and Dissemination of Scientific Information in French

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About the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL)

CARL provides leadership on behalf of Canada's research libraries and enhances their contribution to research and higher education. It promotes the efficiency and sustainability of knowledge creation, dissemination and preservation, as well as the implementation of public policies that ensure wider access to research results.

Introduction

University libraries are a central pillar of the Canadian research ecosystem. In addition to serving their community, they support the creation, dissemination, preservation and mobilization of scientific knowledge, particularly in terms of open science infrastructure. Despite the rigorous work of librarians and experts to improve access and research services in French, the ubiquitous use of English as the language of science presents important challenges for the vitality and recognition of knowledge in French. This brief presents our take on the situation regarding the creation and dissemination of scientific knowledge in French in the library in connection with our strategic areas, particularly regarding the priority areas of CARL and its members, such as open science and, tangentially, open education.

Diagnosis of the situation regarding the creation and dissemination of scientific knowledge in French

We reiterate the challenges faced by university libraries raised by the Partenariat des bibliothèques universitaires du Québec (PBUQ), which are also experienced by institutions across Canada, particularly in French-speaking and French-speaking minority linguistic contexts:

- **Limited access to resources in French to develop French collections:** Francophone scientific sources are less abundant than anglophone ones.

University libraries therefore offer collections where English is overrepresented compared to French-language productions.

- **Reduced visibility of research in French:** The databases and search engines commonly used within university communities prioritize English-language content, which makes research in French less discoverable.

- **Difficulties in implementing joint funding programs to collectively support open access publication initiatives:** The number of university libraries interested in co-financing and co-producing titles in French is significantly lower than the number that contribute funds for English-language publications. Projects for the production of English-language titles are more likely to be successful.

- **Absence of a discovery layer between institutional repositories:** An integrated ecosystem for content discoverability at the national level would allow increased visibility of research published in French across Canadian post-secondary institutions and internationally.

- **Under-funding of francophone initiatives**: Digitization projects, open access publishing, the production of open educational resources (OER) or scholarly publishing in French receive little specific support. The projects selected in the funding programs for digitization are those with a broad scope (thus targeting the largest volume of users).

Measures that the Government of Canada should include in a strategy to ensure the vitality and sustainability of French-language research

CARL believes that universities have a mission to create and disseminate knowledge, and that open science for all is the best way to benefit societies in all parts of the world.

To strengthen support for the creation and dissemination of scientific information in French, we recommend the following measures:

- **Invest in French-language infrastructure for dissemination** through support for bilingual, interoperable and accessible institutional repositories with high quality French-language interfaces. Ensuring their interoperability with other national and international infrastructures (such as OpenAIRE, ORCID, Dataverse, etc.) so that French-language content is visible, indexed, and reusable on a global scale.

- **Provide ongoing support to Érudit** for the publication, dissemination, indexing and preservation of research in the humanities and social

sciences. This infrastructure benefits Francophone researchers as well as users in the rest of Canada and internationally by providing visibility and access to this research.

- **Study and take advantage of the opportunities offered by cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) tools** which offer possibilities for the development of fluid infrastructures and functionality in the scholarly ecosystem in both official languages. The rapid rise of AI technologies – including natural language processing models, indexing automation, rich metadata generation, and smart recommendation systems – offer powerful levers to modernize and strengthen management practices, dissemination and access to knowledge in French and English.

- **Sustain and strengthen the funding of the Répertoire de vedettes-matière (RVM),** the national open access indexing standard in the French language, so as to fully support francophone and bilingual libraries in Canada. The RVM, a central pillar of documentation, offers five specialized thesauri and is subject to continuous enrichment, including an important work of revision of the vocabulary related to Indigenous peoples. In a context where access to resources in French remains a crucial issue for Francophone communities, increased financial support is necessary to ensure viability, updating and adaptation of the RVM to their specific needs. Enhanced funding represents a concrete means to support linguistic equity, promote access to knowledge in French and promote the vitality of francophone institutions at the national level.

- **Recognize the work of librarians as contributors to science** by valuing their role in research data management, open science and scientific mediation in French. University and college librarians play a strategic role in the ecosystem of contemporary research. Their contribution goes far beyond traditional documentary support: they actively participate in the construction, organization, preservation and dissemination of knowledge.

Furthermore, we believe that a strategy to ensure the vitality and sustainability of research in French must include targeted support for open educational resources (OER) insofar as OERs contribute to the creation, the dissemination and mobilization of research in French and ensure the training of the future generation of francophone researchers.

OERs are teaching, learning or research materials in the public domain or published with an intellectual property license allowing their use, adaptation and distribution free of charge (fabriqueREL, n.d.). Furthermore, CARL believes that subjecting all forms of open scholarship to greater examination improves quality, strengthens accountability, fosters collaboration and thus increases visibility and impact. Open education practices align well with these principles, as they reduce barriers to education, leverage technology to improve teaching and learning, and can translate into high-quality learning experiences.

The Government of Canada can play a catalytic role in the adoption of OER, both within and outside post-secondary education. Enabling the use of OER is part of many federal initiatives and priorities, including commitments to open government and the Digital Charter of Canada.

Despite the proliferation of open educational resources on a global scale, the unique historical, cultural and linguistic character of each country is not necessarily reflected in the content of the developed OER. Indeed, many resources developed in Canada, including OERs created under provincially funded programs outside of Ontario and Quebec, are not adapted into French, which currently limits the use of OER created in Canada across the country. Canada's bilingual status places it in a unique position to support the creation of OER in both French and English. Consequently, Canada should make efforts to produce content in both official languages.

On this front, the Government of Canada should consider the following measures to strengthen the contribution of university libraries in the vitality and mobilization of research in French:

- **Provide sustainable financial support for the creation, adaptation, translation, and publication of OER in French** to reduce the gap in educational and scholarly publishing in Canada, for example through the Canada Book Fund or the tri-agencies (see ACUFC and FCFA, 2022). We suggest the development of a grant program for translation and dissemination of OER in French in connection with the Action Plan for Official Languages (Canadian Heritage, 2023)

- **Establishment of a coordinated pan-Canadian repository to host OER** thus promoting the discoverability of Canadian content and developing harmonized metadata.

- **Develop a leadership mandate for OER at the federal level** for active participation in discussions and coordination of international efforts and actions with the Francophonie.

- **Add an "open" or "OER" component as a criterion for the evaluation of research grants from the three granting councils** to promote the sharing, popularization and mobilization of knowledge in French among Canadian citizens.

Examples of good practices in training the next generation, creating and disseminating scientific knowledge in French, as well as ways to recognize research in French

CARL – Evidence Synthesis Institute Canada: For library staff who primarily support the synthesis of knowledge on topics other than health sciences.

Co-organized by CARL and the University of Victoria libraries, it will be held in French in November 2025.

CARL – Librarians' Research Institute: Organized by CARL and hosted by Université Laval, it is designed for librarians to develop their research skills and interests, and to connect with other academic librarian-researchers across Canada.

CARL – Communities of Practice: Network of support for practitioners, many of whom are strong experts, through communities of practice;

- **Canadian Repositories Community of Practice**: brings together the professionals who manage open repositories in libraries, academic institutions and scholarly organizations across Canada.

- **Community of Practice for Bibliometrics and Research Impact**: brings together librarians and other colleagues from Canadian academic institutions who work in or are interested in the fields of bibliometrics and research impact assessment.

- **The Library Publishing Community Engagement Team (LPCET)**: supports Canadian library publishing professionals in their functional roles and to increase Canadian expertise and capacity in this field, for example, through the development of a documentation centre for library publishing.

- **Open Education Community of Practice:** establishes a national network of professionals in open education with the aim of facilitating communication, information-sharing and best practices.

Network of institutional repositories (Scholaris): A national shared repository service that provides hosted infrastructure and support to Canadian institutional repositories and meets the needs of participating Francophone universities.

eCampusOntario Open Library: provides instructors and students with access to over 1,900 free open-licensing educational resources. The library is integrated into a publishing infrastructure, which facilitates the creation or adaptation of OER.

fabriqueREL: Funded by the Quebec Ministry of Higher Education, fabriqueREL supports instructors in designing and distributing high-quality French-language open educational resources (OER) adapted to the needs of the higher education sector. The fabriqueREL emphasizes collaboration, pedagogical innovation and accessibility, and is committed to supporting the creation of enriching content that promotes knowledge sharing in French.

Érudit: The research and dissemination platform Érudit is a leader in terms of publication, dissemination, and use of data and scientific articles in French. Its platform is consulted throughout the world, which allows the dissemination and promotion of scientific research in French. Its technological development and upgrading must be supported so that it remains competitive and efficient, in a world dominated by an oligopoly of scientific publishers.

Coalition Publica: Partnership between Érudit and the Public Knowledge Project, which supports the development of an open and sustainable national infrastructure. This type of initiative puts Canada at the forefront in the overall context of open infrastructures for scholarly publishing.

Réseau Circé: This network mobilizes the scholarly publishing community of Quebec to promote scientific publication in French in a diamond open access model and contributes to enhancing the role of scientific journals within society. Among its strategic actions, the network coordinates and mutualizes services for scientific journals; creates new opportunities for national and international consultation and collaboration between the various players in the world of scholarly publishing; provides evidence-based answers to questions related to the production, dissemination, and discoverability of science in French; and promotes public support for scientific publishing in order to ensure its vitality and sustainability. A research team of librarians participates in the Libraries pole of the network.

Fonds de recherche du Québec (FRQ): Through its adherence to Plan S, the FRQ and Quebec in general promote an open research ecosystem in French. The Fonds also supports the training of young researchers and research partnerships at the national and international levels, which ensures the vitality of knowledge in French.

Digital Research Alliance of Canada: provides advanced computing infrastructure, data management and software development to support research practices, innovation and leadership in all academic disciplines. The tools and training hosted by the Alliance are offered in both official languages.

- **Federated Research Data Repository (FRDR)**: A publishing platform to share and preserve research data.

- **Borealis:** A secure, multidisciplinary Canadian research data repository supported by academic libraries and Canadian research institutions.

- **DMP Assistant**: An online data management tool to help researchers prepare their data management plans.

French national repository HAL: An open and multidisciplinary digital archive for sharing research results in open access. With its interoperable

infrastructure, HAL follows the FAIR and PlanS principles and thus ensures quality and sustainability standards for metadata.

Conclusion

University libraries are central to the mission of creating and disseminating scientific information for research institutions. Without the expertise of their librarians and teams, the ecosystem for creating and disseminating scientific information could not be what it is today. However, some challenges persist to better support the vitality of knowledge in French. In the absence of scientific knowledge in French and with its sometimes-flawed discoverability, we are faced with two distinct and inequitable research communities; the anglophone, which progresses easily in an ecosystem that meets their needs, and the francophone, which struggles to thrive in its language without incentives and recognition.

In considering the Francophone minority communities in the country, we must ensure that the integration of scientific infrastructures and programs can be extended at the national (not provincial) level to avoid linguistic isolation. These infrastructures and creation and dissemination programs must have the capacity to function in both official languages as soon as they are integrated.

An inclusive, bold and coordinated national strategy for scientific scholarship in French will better support and position science in French as a pillar of Canadian identity for its communities of students and researchers.

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