

2025 Federal Budget

CARL Brief to the Department of Finance Canada

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Canadian Association of Research Libraries
Association des bibliothèques de recherche du Canada

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Summary

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government strengthen Canadian economic growth by stimulating open science through an annual investment of \$5.5M to foster strengthened incentives and coordinated activities.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government make the *Equitable Access to Reading Program* (EARP) permanent and prioritize funding to groups that provide national accessible reading services through libraries in French and English to people with print disabilities across Canada and who have the proven capacity, such as CELA and NNELS.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the government renew funding for the *Accessible Digital Books—Support for Organizations* program within the Canada Book Fund for the next 5 years at \$22.8M to assist Canadian publishers to create born-accessible materials.
- **Recommendation 4:** That the government increase Library and Archives Canada's base budget by \$35M to enable optimal 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

A Strong and Coordinated Commitment to Open Science

The government's stated goals include attracting top global talent to help build our economy and reduce operational spending so Canadians can invest in building a stronger G7 economy. As part of this effort, it has expressed a commitment to modernizing science and research so that federal investment in research is driven by, and bringing Canadian expertise to, big global challenges.

We believe that a stronger federal commitment to open science across all publicly supported research will foster these goals, and that the investment required is modest but essential at this time. More coordination of today's fragmented landscape will realize tangible gains in how Canada participates in the global scientific endeavour, leading to multiple net benefits including data sovereignty, ecosystem interoperability, cost reduction through collaboration, digital transformation, and long-term sustainability of the Canadian scientific record.

Open science comprises:

... All scientific disciplines and aspects of scholarly practices, including basic and applied sciences, natural and social sciences and the humanities, and it builds on the following key pillars: open scientific knowledge, open science infrastructures, open science communication, open engagement of societal actors and open dialogue with other knowledge systems.¹

Canada has already begun this work through Government of Canada measures, including investing, through ISED, in the Digital Research Alliance of Canada and the Office of the Chief Science Advisor (OCSA), and fostering better coordination and open policy direction among the federal granting agencies. The Alliance, for example, unites experts in

¹ UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (<https://doi.org/10.54677/MNMH8546>), Article 6.

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. National research infrastructure requires effective research data management (RDM) so that Canada's data assets are FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) – and as open as possible, as closed as necessary. Canada can gain major efficiencies by streamlining the research application, funding, and evaluation ecosystem by implementing a national Persistent Identifiers (PIDs) strategy. These are all key components of open science; however, Canada's progress in these areas is slower than in other countries. Currently, Canada lacks several key structures – unlike many other G7 and European countries – that would drive faster and more measurable progress.

Proven, well documented models exist. For example, France has completed its Second French Plan for Open Science and is preparing a new national Open Science Strategy for the next eight years. Crucially, they have formalized a stakeholder advisory Committee on Open Science; established an Open Science Coordinator; defined and monitor a national strategy; and fund a modest (6M Euro) National Fund for Open Science to encourage promotion, uptake, infrastructure deployment, monitoring, and optimal coordination and international liaison.

Adopting similar structures would allow Canada to support graduate student training, incentivize open science practices, fund small-scale infrastructure for data sharing and open access to research articles, and other low-cost mechanisms that shift research practice. In turn, this will maximize the impact of federal research support across Canada's research ecosystem and advance internationally collaborative and mission-driven research.

We believe this role should be embedded in the capstone research funding organization announced in Budget 2024 “to provide better coordination across the federally funded research ecosystem.” However, as that organization has yet to be formed, this coordination role should immediately be added to the mandate and capacity of tri-agencies' collaborative management committee.

We recommend an annual investment of \$5.5M, – a figure roughly aligned with the central budget of the OS Coordinator's office and national fund in France – which would allow Canada to keep pace with international partners in fostering open science through multiple paths: open access to research outputs, implanting FAIR data principles in research practices, addressing the need to capture source code, and fostering persistence in a highly efficient, interoperating research ecosystem.

A strengthened open science ecosystem is a powerful engine for innovation and economic growth. By improving knowledge transfer across academia, government, and the private sector, open science practices accelerate the commercialization of ideas and support the development of high-value Canadian technologies and services.

Targeted investments in open science infrastructure and governance can boost research efficiency, reduce duplication, and streamline workflows across disciplines and sectors. Better processes and shared standards foster collaboration and create new opportunities for partnerships with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), helping to translate scientific breakthroughs into tangible economic outcomes.

As the government balances fiscal responsibility with building an innovation-driven economy, bolstering Canada's open science architecture represents a prudent and strategic investment.

Recommendation:

- 1) That the government strengthen Canadian economic growth by stimulating open science through an annual investment of \$5.5M to foster strengthened incentives and coordinated activities.

Support for Accessible Publishing

Prime Minister Carney's 2025 Canada Strong plan identifies "Championing Science and Research" as an action item and includes an intention to "Enable the fuller inclusion of people with disabilities in academic, social, and professional life by requiring Canadian publishers to provide an accessible copy of all e-books produced or released in Canada by 2030."² This aligns with the 2025 PMO mandate letter referencing Canada as a "dynamic country that celebrates our diversity, cares for the most vulnerable among us, and strives for a better future for all"³. Ensuring equitable access to reading and other published works for Canadians with print disabilities is essential to furthering the values and goals in these documents.

Providing broad and equitable access to information and scholarly knowledge is the core mission of libraries. [The ARL/CARL Task Force on Marrakesh Treaty Implementation: Final](#)

² Liberal Party of Canada, Canada Strong: Mark Carney's Plan "Unite - Secure - Protect - Build, 2025, p. 52-52. <https://liberal.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/292/2025/04/Canada-Strong.pdf>.

³ Office of the Prime Minister, Mandate Letter, May 21, 2025. <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2025/05/21/mandate-letter>.

[Report](#) (2023) illustrates the significant gap in material availability for people with print disabilities, citing “alternate formats exist for less than 10% of works available worldwide.”⁴

The government has previously supported accessible publishing. Budget 2019 committed \$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](#), however this funding concluded in March 2024. And while Budget 2024 announced an additional \$10M investment to support Canadian authors and publishers, none was specifically allocated to born-accessible digital publishing.

To support equity and inclusion, the Government of Canada should ensure sustained funding for organizations dedicated to providing accessible reading services. In fiscal year 2024-25, after a competitive application process through Employment and Social Development Canada, the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)—key providers of alternate formats for print-disabled Canadians—received applied-for funding under the Equitable Access to Reading Program (EARP), and this program will end in March 2027. This change risks undermining the stability and continuity of services these organizations provide. To uphold Canada’s commitments to accessibility and disability inclusion, it is recommended that the government re-establish dedicated, sustained funding for CELA and NNELS.

An industry-led approach alone cannot meet the needs of Canadians requiring accessible reading services. Work must continue 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 the Liberal Party of Canada’s Disability Statement and Canada Strong plan.

Recommendations:

- 2) That the government make the Equitable Access to Reading Program (EARP) permanent and prioritize funding to groups that provide national accessible reading services through libraries in French and English to people with print disabilities across Canada and who have the proven capacity, such as CELA and NNELS.

⁴ Association of Research Libraries/Canadian Association of Research Libraries "ARL/CARL Task Force on Marrakesh Treaty Implementation, December 2023, p 12.
<https://doi.org/10.29242/report.marrakesh2023>

- 3) That the government renew funding for the *Accessible Digital Books—Support for Organizations* program within the Canada Book Fund for the next 5 years at \$22.8M to assist Canadian publishers to create born-accessible materials, understanding that the marketplace alone cannot be relied upon to resolve accessibility barriers and EARP remains essential to bridge that gap.

Digital Optimization for Efficiency and Government Accountability 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.” While these responsibilities remain vital, they must now be fulfilled in an increasingly digital environment.

LAC has worked diligently 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-one years ago. It is poised to advance innovative initiatives to fully realize the opportunities for better access and the operational efficiencies afforded by digital technologies. Initiatives such as AI-generated metadata, mass digitization, and modern technological infrastructure are essential for delivering optimized services 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 effort, including government support and funding, in these areas is required.

LAC has also committed to ensuring collections 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.

National archives share a common mission to be a record of their nation's governance – its structures, debates, successes, and challenges. They foster transparency and accountability in government practices and build citizens' knowledge of their history and culture. In short, they sustain collective memory. LAC is a world-leading example of a national library and archives with a rich, broad mandate that benefits Canadians and supports the government's open government priority and commitment to enhance accessibility and transparency. The bold digital transformations at LAC require a modest, sustained increase in Government of Canada investment.

Recommendation:

- 4) That the government increase Library and Archives Canada's base budget by \$35M to optimize use of digital technologies and accelerate the transition of documentary heritage and federal government record-keeping to the digital environment.

Conclusion

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries urges the federal government to strengthen Canada's research and knowledge ecosystem by making targeted, modest investments in open science, accessible publishing, and optimizing digital capacity at Library and Archives Canada. Coordinated national support for open science and accessibility would align Canada with international best practices, improve equity of access, and accelerate innovation and economic growth. Sustained investment in these areas will ensure that Canada's research, publishing, and documentary heritage systems remain efficient, inclusive, and globally competitive.

We thank the Department of Finance for the opportunity to help the Canadian government form fiscal priorities and would be happy to discuss any of the points provided here with your department should you like further information.